A STAR IN THE EAST

EDWARD NORMAN HARRIS

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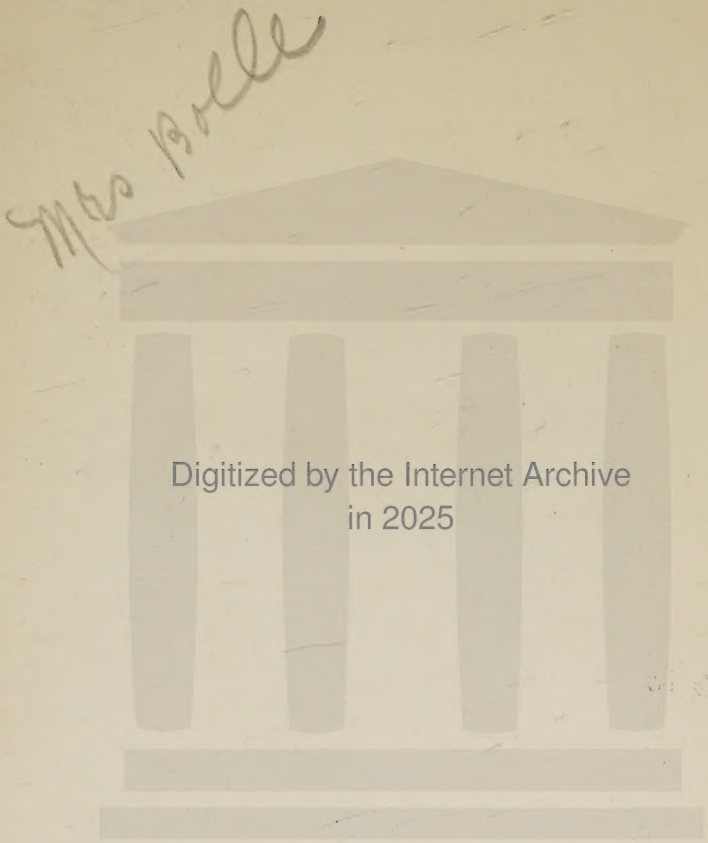

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E. H. Harris

A KAREN CHRISTIAN YOUNG MAN AND HIS SISTER, THARAWADDY, BURMA

TWO KAREN GIRLS IN NATIONAL COSTUME

A STAR IN THE EAST

An Account of American Baptist Missions to the Karens of Burma

By

REV. EDWARD NORMAN HARRIS

Missionary of The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society to The Shwegyin and Paku Karen Missions.

ILLUSTRATED

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light."—Isa. 9:2.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of his father, Rev. Norman Harris, who founded the Shwegyin Karen Mission and built up there a rich spiritual heritage by which the son has for twenty-five years gratefully profited, this book is affectionately dedicated by the author.

28093

PREFACE

AMONG the most successful missions in the world today are those to the Karens of Burma, but unfortunately hitherto little material has been available concerning them except in scattered reports and occasional pamphlets, most of them long since out of print. The writer feels that the Christian world needs to have its attention called again, as it was at the beginning of the work, to the great things which God has done, and is still doing, for this truly remarkable people. Tucked away in an obscure corner of the earth, they were not only kept through many generations measureably true to the inner light (Jno. 1:9), but were also prepared in a most marvellous manner for the reception of the gospel whenever it should be brought to them. As inscriptions on rocks and on brick tablets were in the providence of God hidden away for thousands of years to be unearthed in these recent days as evidence of the reliability of the Scriptures, so, it would seem these people were hidden away from the observation of men to be brought forth, within comparatively recent times as a blessed confirmation of the faith of those who believe in God's

exceeding graciousness towards men of all times and of all races who do not wilfully blind themselves to his truth.

Not only so, but the continued workings of the Spirit in the hearts of these people at the present time and the achievements of grace manifested in the development of strong Christian character and quickened intelligence and even in the unlooked for physical rehabilitation of the Karen race as a whole, afford a fresh demonstration in an unexpected quarter of the universal scope and range of the gospel's power. To the devout student of the dealings of God with the children of men, there is here subject matter which must ever be of absorbing interest.

Toungoo, Burma. E. N. H.

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I

THE KARENS AND THEIR TRADITIONS

WHEN Dr. Judson, the great missionary, first went to Burma in 1813, that country was little known. Its entire area at the present time is only equal to that of the New England States together with New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland, certainly not a great extent of territory as compared with the vast dominions of India and China which border it, the one on the northwest and the other on the north. But in Dr. Judson's day all that could have any possible interest to the average citizen of the western world was a narrow strip of country extending along the coast where a few European merchants had established themselves and were eking out a rather precarious existence.

Then, as now, Burma was richly endowed with natural resources, but her people little understood the value of their splendid heritage. To use the figure of speech which they still frequently employ in referring to themselves, they were like a frog sitting at the foot of a stalk of sugar-cane and knowing nothing of its worth until a water buffalo

or carabao comes along and eats up the luscious growth. Rice grew profusely on the rich alluvial plains. The magnificent forests waved with trees supplying timber of great variety and value. Some of the most remarkable oil fields in the world were to be found there, and they were seemingly worked in a crude way long before the value of the oil was fully understood in America or in Europe. Burma was the home of the pigeon-blood ruby, one of the rarest and most precious of gems. Elephants with their splendid tusks of ivory roamed the jungles, and the peacock with its gorgeous plumage frequented the upland glens. But the country was cursed by its kings. Ignorant, deceitful, vain, superstitious, blood-thirsty, they lived surrounded by sycophants, knew nothing but flattery, and, as might be expected, practiced the utmost cruelties even upon their own people. When a new king ascended the throne, it was customary for him to put all of his relatives to death, lest any of them should contest his place. One king who failed to build himself a new capital in accordance with the custom of the realm, sought to make amends by having sixty persons buried alive under the walls of his palace. It is said of a certain other king that when a subject of his had visited England and returned, the king asked him what he had seen in that strange land, and in particular how it compared with his own kingdom of Burma. Was England so fair and rich a country? "No, your

Majesty," came the reply, "how could it be, for there the lordly teak does not grow." And the king knew no better than to accept the estimate as true.

Needless to say, the cruelty and vindictiveness which surrounded the throne spread through all the lower ranks of government officialdom and indeed permeated the life of the entire people. Aside from the monks of the Buddhist order—for Burma was, and still is, one of the chief strongholds of Buddhism,—the life or property of no one was safe. If any of the common people were suspected of acquiring more wealth than was needed for bare sustenance, some charge would be trumped up against them, and their property be confiscated. Cruelty and oppression were everywhere known. Justice and mercy were not so much as dreamed of. And if this was the attitude of the Burmese even towards those of their own race, one may rightly infer that it would be still more relentless towards those of other races living under their dominion.

Among the most persecuted of these subject peoples were the Karens (accent on the last syllable). Naturally a timid and retiring race, they were perhaps all the more heartily hated and despised by the Burmans on that account. The writer has heard it related by some who remember those early days, that the Karens were subjected to such terrible and heartless oppression that they were

obliged to live for the most part in the farthest recesses of the tropical jungles or in the fastnesses of the mountains. Even there they lived in such constant terror that oftentimes they dared not build their wretched little huts, but dwelt in caves or under overhanging rocks, and would not leave their abodes and return to them by the same route lest a path should be formed and their whereabouts should be discovered. They subsisted by cultivating the soil, which in the mountain regions is so poor that two crops of rice cannot be grown successively on the same piece of land and fresh forests must be cut down every year, entailing a vast amount of labor. Long distances were always placed by the Karens between their homes and their poor little fields, and fortunately the season for cultivating the latter fell chiefly during the rains when the swollen mountain torrents gave practical immunity from the intrusions of their enemies. But oftentimes for six months on a stretch they had no rice and were obliged to subsist on such roots and herbs as they could find growing wild in the jungles. Their chief protection was their abject poverty. Relying on this the men sometimes visited the cities and towns of the Burmans, but the women never ventured near them, knowing that to do so would be to subject themselves to certain insult and abuse. The Karens are naturally lighter of skin than the Burmans, and it is said that most of the latter who are of fairer

complexion than their fellows are descendants of Karen women who had been captured in some raid and held as slaves.

Dr. Judson seems to have been in Burma about fourteen years before he so much as learned of the existence of the Karen people. He then saw a group of Karens come into the city of Rangoon and made inquiries concerning them. He was told that they were an exceedingly uncouth, awkward, backward race, but when he asked concerning their religion, he was informed that they did not worship idols. On further investigation it developed that they had a wonderful body of traditions and sayings which kept alive among them the knowledge of the true God, creator of the heavens and of the earth.

Following is a translation of the prose form of

The Karen Tradition of the Creation and Fall

"God created heaven and earth."

"Having created heaven and earth, He created the sun, He created the moon, He created the stars."

"Having created the sun, the moon and the stars, He created man. And of what did He create man? He created man from the earth."

"Having created man, He created woman. How did He create woman? He took a rib out of the man, and created a woman."

"Having created woman, He created life. How did He create life? Father God said, 'I love my son and daughter; I will give them my great life.' He took a little portion of His own life, breathed into the nostrils of the two persons, and they came to life, and were real human beings."

"Having created man, He created food and drink. He created rice, He created water, He created fire, He created cows, He created elephants, He created birds."

"Having created animals Father God said, 'My son and daughter, your father will make and give you a garden. In the garden are seven different kinds of trees, bearing seven different kinds of fruit. Among the seven one tree is not good to eat. Do not eat of its fruit. If you eat it, you will become old, you will die. Eat it not. All else that I have created I give to you. Eat and drink to the full. Once in seven days I will visit you. All that I have commanded you observe and do. Forget me not. Pray to me every morning and night.' "

"Afterwards Satan came and said, 'Why are you here?' 'Our Father God put us here,' they said. 'What do you eat here,' Satan inquired. 'Our Father God created food and drink for us; food without end.' Satan said, 'Show me your food.' And they went, with Satan following behind them, to show him. On arriving at the garden, they showed him the fruits, saying, 'This is sweet, this is sour, this is bitter, this is astringent, this is sav-

ory, this is fiery; but here is a tree,—we know not whether it be sour or sweet. Our Father God said to us, "Do not eat the fruit of this tree; if you eat it, you will die." We do not eat it, and so do not know whether it be sour or sweet.' 'Not so, my children,' Satan replied. 'The heart of your Father God is not with you. This is the richest and sweetest. It is richer than the others, sweeter than the others, and not merely richer and sweeter, but if you eat it, you will possess miraculous powers, you will be deified. You will be able to ascend into heaven, and descend into the earth. You will be able to fly. The heart of your God is not with you. This desirable thing he has not given you. My heart is not like the heart of your God. He is not honest. He is envious. I am honest. I am not envious. I love you and tell you the whole. Your Father God does not love you. He did not tell you the whole. However if you do not believe me, do not eat it. But if each one will taste a single fruit, then you will know.' The man replied, 'Our Father God said to us, "Eat not the fruit of this tree," and we will not eat it.' Thus saying, he rose up and went away."

"But the woman listened to Satan, and being rather pleased with what he said, remained. After Satan had continued coaxing her for a long time, she wavered and asked him, 'If we eat, shall we indeed be able to fly?' 'My daughter,' Satan replied, 'I seek to persuade you because I love you.'

The woman took one of the fruits and ate. And Satan smilingly said, 'My daughter listens to me very well. Now go, give the fruit to your husband, and say to him, "I have eaten the fruit. It is exceedingly rich." If he does not eat, deceive him, that he may eat. Otherwise, you see, if you die, you will die alone, or, if you become deified, you will be deified alone.' The woman doing as Satan told her, went and coaxed her husband, till she won him over to her own mind, and he took the fruit from the hand of his wife and ate. When he had eaten, she went to Satan and said, 'My husband has eaten the fruit.' On hearing that he laughed exceedingly and said, 'Now you have listened to me very well indeed, my son and daughter'."

"On the morning of the day after they had eaten, God visited them. But they did not follow Him singing praises, as they had been wont to do. He reproached them and said, 'Why have you eaten the fruit of the tree I commanded you not to eat?' They did not dare to reply. And God cursed them. 'Now you have not observed what I commanded you,' He said; 'The fruit that is not good to eat, I told you not to eat, but you have not listened and have eaten. Therefore you shall become old, you shall get sick, and you shall die.'"

The Karens reveled in rhyming couplets which were handed down from their forefathers by the hundred and by the thousand. Many of these

couplets are so ancient that their meaning is now obscure, but those whose meaning is still clear set forth conceptions of God quite in accord with the tradition given above. The three following stanzas each with a question and response are after a translation made by Mrs. H. M. N. Armstrong:

The earth at first a speck of froth;
Who created? Who remade it?
The earth at first a star of foam;
Who created? Who remade it?
The earth at first a speck of froth;
God created, He remade it.
The earth at first a star of foam;
God Himself formed, He re-formed it.

Heaven vast the Eternal placed,
Earth beneath the Eternal placed;
Heaven and earth He cleft apart,
Placed whom when He would depart?
The Eternal ordered Heaven vast,
Fixed the earth's foundation fast;
Heaven and earth asunder cleft,
Man and woman there were left.

Like a top the round earth spinning,
How lived folk on the beginning?
Like thread on reel it circles round,
What have the first folk on it found?
Round the earth spins like a top,
Turned as reel without a stop;
Here the first folk lived at leisure,
Here the first folk lived for pleasure.

Another stanza runs as follows the thought being that God can open out or fold up the universe like

a telescope, a unique and really sublime conception:

> The whole round earth God came to form,
> He can make broad, He can make narrow;
> The whole round earth God came to mend,
> With ease He can make broad or narrow.

Instead of thinking of the earth as being God's footstool, the Karen regards it as His couch, hence the following rather naive lines in which the thought is of one asleep in the frail native bamboo house when those about must tread softly lest they awaken him:—

> Earth is the sleeping place of God,
> Hence noiseless thou, with heel-prints light,
> Thy way must take;
> Earth is His widely spreading couch,—
> Soft-footed steal thou through the night,
> Lest He awake.

Another saying is, "The poor in spirit and the steadfast in heart are God's delight." Finally, where is there to be found in any literature or in any folklore a finer saying than this, which is taken from the maxims of the ancient Karen elder,—"Children and grandchildren, it is because men are not righteous that they do not see God."

None of these couplets or sayings is traceable to modern Christian influences. They have all been collected with great care from the lips of the heathen themselves. Some of the ideas presented here, such as that of the earth being at first of the

nature of froth or foam, and that of the earth revolving like a top, are certainly surprising, but their authenticity and genuineness as being of purely Karen origin are beyond question.

It will be seen at once what an advantage is given to the missionary in preaching to the Karen people. He might go to any other of the races of eastern Asia, and he would have much difficulty in finding words in their language which would adequately convey to them the idea of God and even greater difficulty in arousing in them a sense of the divine holiness. But let him go to even the most backward Karens and use their word K'sah Y'wah, and at once they would understand the very same God whom he worships, the God who is the creator of the heavens and of the earth, the God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, the holy and righteous God.

The Karens as a people were, in general, mild and peaceable, truthful and honest, affectionte and industrious. Their chief failing was, and is to this day, drunkenness. Among the heathen every family, or at least every village or little cluster of houses has its still, by means of which a strong spirit is produced from rice, the chief product of the country, and its use is almost universal. But, aside from that, the Karens were far and away the most moral and the most virtuous people of the east. In their primitive condition before they came much into contact with other races, while the prac-

tice of polygamy was permitted, it was very unusual, and fornication and adultery were of the rarest occurrence among them and were severely punished. Harlotry was so utterly unknown that they had no word for it. Every one built his granary out in the rice field, perhaps miles away from his home, and yet no one ever thought of stealing the grain. If any one found a tree with a swarm of bees in it the honey from which was not yet ready to collect, all he needed to do to establish his claim upon it and secure it against being taken by some one else, was to twist up a wisp of grass and put it in some chink at the foot of the tree. This interesting custom is witnessed to this day in the fact that the Karen word for sign means "the 'our grass' thing or idea," the grass having been a sign of ownership. But perhaps an even stronger evidence of the moral idealism of the Karen people is to be found in their conception of their ancestors, or rather of the contrast between themselves and their ancestors. A rumor current among them runs about as follows:—"Children and grandchildren, we are not the real Karen race. The real Karen stock lives far to the north over many ranges of mountains. They are mighty by reason of righteousness. We are but the offscourings of our people and were cast out because we were not worthy to remain among them." Many races claim that their progenitors were mighty because of physical prowess. Is there another which claims that its

progenitors were mighty because of righteousness, and so humbly reveres them?

The history of the human family is far from flattering. There is the Light, even the true light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world, but men will not receive it. Well may we believe that Paul was right when, in the first chapter of Romans, he wrote that all men know God, but the heathen have held down or suppressed that knowledge in unrighteousness. They blind their eyes against it, and turn to their various systems of so-called religion which obscure to them the truth. They prefer darkness to light. But here was a most remarkable and unusual phenomenon. In the midst of races which for hundreds and thousands of years had, like the Burmese, professed the atheistic tenets of Buddhism, or, like the Chinese, had been given over to the senseless worship of their ancestors, or like the natives of India, while professing to have many gods, knew nothing of divine holiness, was a simple minded people which still held to the primitive revelation which we may suppose to have been given to the entire human race, maintained their virtue through many generations and kept measureably clear the conception and knowledge of the truth.

II

VARIOUS THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN AND RACIAL CONNECTIONS OF THE KARENS

WHENCE the Karens came or how they got their traditions—unless, as has been suggested, it may have been by primitive revelation—it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty. It may be inferred from their own accounts that they left the early cradle of the human race many centuries or millenniums ago, and, following along the northern slopes of the Himalaya Mountains, or crossing the plains of Thibet, reached their present habitat by way of Western China. These traditions are very vague, but they tell of passing over rivers of sand, which may refer to the desert of Gobi. Certain it is that at the present time, or more especially at the time when they were first brought to the knowledge of the missionaries—since then, under the protection afforded by the British government many of them have come down to the more congenial life upon the plains—they occupied for the most part the lower ranges in Burma and Siam of

those spurs and off-shoots of the Himalayas which find their ultimate termini in the partly submerged mountain-islands of the Malayan Archipelago. There is a curious story to the effect that on the early migrations from the northern country there were ninety-nine families or tribes in all, but that they stopped to make their dinner of snails which they found in great abundance. They knew nothing, however, of sucking them out of their shells, and so cooked them as they were, adding a few sprigs of an herb which gave out a blood-red juice. Thirty-three families, including the Karens, boiled their snails for a while, and, finding that they were not soft, and supposing that the red juice was the blood of the snails still uncooked, left them as they were and pushed on, while the sixty-six other families, waiting to cook their snails soft, were left behind to this day. These were the Muhsoes, Kwes, Kaws and other closely allied races which extend far up into the mountainous regions of western China between whom and the Karens there seems little doubt that there is a certain affinity. A comparative study of their languages such as has been carried out in the case of the races of western Europe, might perhaps unravel to some extent the history of these interesting peoples, but nothing of the kind has yet been adequately attempted.

Although the Karens had no literature when the missionaries came to them—not so much as an alphabet—they nevertheless had a saying among

themselves that they had once had a book which taught them the way of life, but that through their carelessness they lost it. How the book was lost did not clearly appear. Some said, they left it under the eaves of the house, and the fowls scratching about, dislodged it so that it fell to the ground, and there the pigs, rooting around, tore it to pieces or covered it up. Others said that the book was placed on the stump of a tree where, being of leather, it became softened by the action of the water during the rainy season, and the hungry dogs found it and ate it up. But granting an element of truth in the essential parts of this narrative, no one can say at the present time what the Karen book was, or even whether it was the source of their traditions.

It is of course possible that the Karens derived their ideas from the Nestorian Christians at the same time that the gospel was carried by them into China. But a serious objection to this theory is that they have no knowledge of Christ—which would hardly seem possible if they had come into contact with that source of information. A favorite view entertained by many of the early missionaries was that the Karens belonged to the lost tribes of Israel. This opinion seems not to be so commonly held at the present day, and yet there is much to favor it. The Karen name for God, Y'wah, is very like Yahweh which scholars suppose to have been the ancient Hebrew pronun-

ciation of the sacred name Jehovah. The Karen language has several sounds which were common to the Semitic languages, but do not appear to be in use except in a limited degree among the other races of eastern Asia. The Karens know nothing of circumcision, but they have certain customs which remind one of some of the Mosaic institutions, notably the passover. When any one is taken ill, all the members of the family will come together in the house—and they often travel long distances in order that the family circle may be complete—and eat a pig. No bone of the pig must be broken, and no one must go down out of the house until the ceremony is over. Of course this custom differs from that of the passover in that the pig was an abomination to the Jew. But the use of the pig instead of the lamb might be accounted for from the fact that, the Karens having no sheep, the pig would be the most convenient substitute. Some of the early missionaries even thought they could discern a Jewish cast in the Karen physiognomy. The present writer has himself seen a few Karens who had the aquiline nose characteristic of the Israelitish race. Several of these are members of a family in his own field which is descended from an old priestly line. If further observation and inquiry should elicit other instances of the kind, the fact might indicate that, whatever may have been the origin of the Karen race as a whole, it received in very early times an infiltration of Jewish people

who became its instructors and religious leaders. More than this cannot at the present time be said. In general, however, the Karens are purely Mongolian in their features and characteristics. They are shorter in stature and darker in color than the Chinese, but not so dark as either the Burmese or the Siamese. Like all these races, they have broad cheek-bones and wide-flat nostrils, but not the almond eyes of the Chinese. Their language, of which there are several dialects, is monosyllabic, and is characterized by the peculiar intonations with which all students of the languages of southeastern Asia are familiar. Thus the word "meh" pronounced in a high, sustained key means "tooth"; pronounced with a heavy, falling accent it means "tail"; terminated abruptly on a middle pitch it means "eye"; a short, quick accent on a rather high key gives it the significance of "sand"; a gentle circumflex accent makes it mean a "mole" or some such disfigurement of the person; and, most difficult of all for the foreigner to acquire, a somewhat prolonged accent with a peculiar resonant quality of tone gives the meaning "bridal gift."

A very singular circumstance in connection with the Karen traditions is that they seem to contain no distinct and clear references to the flood, accounts of which are so common among most primitive races. On account of this peculiarity of Karen tradition the theory has sometimes been broached that the Karens may have forsaken the cradle of the

MOUNTAIN KARENS IN THE OLD SINGLE PIECE KAREN GARMENT

HILL KAREN WOMEN

human race even before the flood. This position would perhaps be tenable if, as some affirm, the Scriptures do not assert the absolute universality of the flood but only that it was co-extensive with the then known world.

But, whatever view may be entertained of the origin of the Karen traditions of the creation and fall, they certainly seem to have been derived originally from the same source as the account given in the Scripture, if not from the Scripture itself, and they are no doubt of great antiquity. Their preservation in so great purity by mere word of mouth is certainly remarkable, but not incredible, especially since the fact has a well-known parallel in the Homeric poems which were in like manner passed on verbally from generation to generation. Moreover the natural isolation of a hill people would keep such transmissions free from extraneous ideas to which contact with other races might render them liable.

III

THE RELIGION OF THE KAREN PEOPLE

HAVING these wonderful traditions of the creation and fall and these sublime conceptions of God, it might be thought that the Karens would need nothing more; they would of course worship God, and there would be no occasion for sending them missionaries. But, although the Karens knew of God, they did not worship him. In times of persecution, to be sure, their priests would gather them together and offer prayers on their behalf, one of which is still preserved in the following form:—

"Our Father in heaven, we are greatly oppressed; we get down from our houses when the hens get down from their roost; we return home when the hens go to roost again. If we get four annas, it is taken away; if we get two annas, it is taken away. Our graves are dug seven cubits deep, and they scrape in the sand above us; there is none to lift our heads, there is none to carry our feet. Come to us, O Lord, come to us."

To read these words now is affecting. They show how near the Karens came to a true concep-

tion of the God of grace and how easily they might have worshipped him. But these prayers were only occasional. In general the people did not profess to pray to God or worship him in any way. On the other hand, it comes with something of a shock to hear them acknowledge that their religion, such as it is, consists in serving Satan, the one who deceived them in the beginning, and carrying out his instructions.

Various accounts are given as to how this strange apostacy arose. One is to the effect that after the fall one of the children of the first pair was taken ill, and the parents said to themselves, "What shall we do? God has forsaken us. We must betake ourselves to Satan again." So they went to Satan, and asked him what they should do. "Well," said he, "you must get a pig." So they got a pig, and Satan taught them certain ceremonies that they must go through with. And they went through with these ceremonies, and surely enough the child recovered. But a few days after, another child was taken ill, and so they went to Satan again, and asked him what they should do. "Well," said he, "did you get a pig and go through with the ceremonies I taught you?" "Oh, yes," they said, "we have done all that, and still our child is not getting any better, but is rather growing worse." "Well, then," said Satan, "you must catch a fowl." So they caught a fowl, and Satan taught them how to divine the omens from the

bones of the fowl. Just what the process is, the writer has not learned, but it seems from the accounts given him to be something like breaking the "wishbone," as is sometimes done among the children of white people. They did just as Satan told them to do, but instead of getting better their child continued to grow worse and finally died. So they went to Satan again, and said, "Here, what do you mean? Our child was taken ill, and we got a pig, and went through with the ceremonies you taught us, and when that did not suffice, we got a fowl, and did just as you told us to do; but instead of getting any better our child continued to grow worse. In fact it died." "Oh, well," said Satan, "whenever any one of you is taken ill, you must get a pig and go through with the ceremonies I taught you, and if that does not suffice, you must get a fowl, and do just as I told you to do, and—" here Satan used a play upon words which made it possible to understand his meaning in either one of two ways; that if the omens proved favorable, the person would live, and if unfavorable, the person would die, or, what was an absolutely true, but also an utterly heartless thing to say, that "If he is to live, he will live and if he is to die, he will die." And that is all the comfort and consolation that those poor people have had from that day to this, for whenever any one of them is taken ill, they get pigs and fowls and do just as Satan taught them to do, and surely enough it happens just as Satan

said—he must be given credit for telling the truth for once in his life—if the person is to live, he lives, and if he is to die, he dies.

The writer sometimes avails himself of this account in preaching to the heathen. He meets an old man on the jungle path—for over much of the territory which he traverses there is nothing which one could dignify by the title of "roads"—and says to him, "Uncle," a title of respect which it is customary to use in addressing a senior, "did you know that the Karen tradition is grievously at error in one point?" "Why, no," he says, "I had not thought of it." Then the missionary goes on to say that where the Karen tradition narrates the creation of the heavens and the earth, how God created the heavens and the earth, and the sun and the moon and the stars, how he created the grasses of the field and the trees of the forest, and how he created man and woman, and placed them in the garden, and gave them the command that they might eat of the fruit of all the trees of the garden save one, but should not eat of that lest they die, and how they disregarded the command, that is all true, but where the Karen tradition goes on to say that God forsook the Karen people, there it is in error, and very grievously in error. For, if a child says, "I left my mother," that is one thing, but if it says, "My mother left me," that is an entirely different thing. For, if it says, "I left my mother," it is placing blame on no one but itself,

but, if it says, "My mother left me," it seems to be blaming the mother, for the mother ought to care for the child. "And now," says the missionary, "if you Karens would say, 'We have forsaken God,' that would be one thing, but when you say that God has forsaken you, that is an entirely different thing. For, if you would say that you had forsaken God, you would be taking the blame upon yourselves where it belongs, but when you say that God has forsaken you, you seem to be laying the blame of your separation upon God, and it is a very grievous sin to lay upon God the faults that are our own." And the missionary does not remember ever to have preached in this way but that his listener, if not sincerely convinced in his heart, was at least silenced—he had nothing more to say.

Another way which the Karens have of accounting for their customs is by reference to the manner in which their book was lost. They say that, as the fowls and the pigs scratched down the book and covered it over, the wisdom of the book must have gone into them, and that is the reason for examining such animals for omens.

For the rest, the religious beliefs of the Karens are a jumble of superstitions without system or consistency. In fact their ideas are so vague and unrelated that they are frequently twitted by the Burmans with having no religion at all. Whatever they have is pure animism or so-called spirit-

worship, which means not so much veneration of the spirits as endeavor to placate them or in some way escape their evil influence. For, strange to say, the Karens make their very conception of the benignity of God an excuse for not worshipping him. They say, "God is good any way. There is no need to be afraid of him. But there are any number of evil spirits about, and there is no telling how much harm they may do." The consequence is that, having no wholesome fear of God, they are given over to countless other fears. They live in constant suspense lest they may inadvertently run counter to some malicious, unseen power. A free translation of a favorite Christian Karen hymn runs as follows:—

> The heathen have much cause for fear,
> Nor is their dread in vain,
> But children of the heavenly king
> With joy from fears refrain.

And nothing can more fittingly describe the difference between the two classes of people. A heathen Karen will never start out on a journey if he hears the call of the barking deer or sees a snake cross his path. In times of scarcity he may go many miles to get a basket of rice, and if, on his return, bearing the heavy load on his back, he hears or sees some unfavorable omen, although he may be but a few steps from the house, he will pour out the rice on the ground and not touch it again. Under every

bush or tree there is a spirit which may take offense. There are spirits of the earth, spirits of the air, spirits of the mountains, spirits of the plains, spirits of the forests, spirits of the fields, spirits of the rocks, spirits of the springs, spirits throughout the haunted creation, all bent on mischief to the unwary Karen who may cross their path.

Yet, by a strange inconsistency which seems to be characteristic of the human race as a whole, although the Karens greatly dread these evil spirits and think of them as being possessed of supernatural powers, they nevertheless regard them as being very simple minded and easily imposed upon, just as some people think God may be easily bought off or hoodwinked. Sometimes they will make an offering of a small pig, but say that it is a great boar—and they think the spirit will believe them. On entering the house of a heathen Karen one may often see a deserted wasps' nest hanging over the door. On inquiry he will learn that it is placed there for the purpose of keeping the evil spirits away. They will come at nightfall intending to enter the house and do some mischief, but their attention is attracted by the nest, and they begin to wonder how many cells there are in it. But it seems that they are very poor at counting. So they will begin—"One, two, three, four, six—oh, I have made a mistake and must begin over again. One, three, four—oh, I have made a mistake and must begin over again. One, two, three,

four, five, nine—oh, I have made a mistake and must begin over again." And so they go on and on, making mistakes and having to begin over and over again, until morning dawns and they have to betake themselves to their proper abode.

Aside from these superstitions are many ideas, observances and rites having no special connection with them. Dreams are ascribed to the wandering of the spirit or good genius in sleep. Consequently a person must never be awakened from sleep suddenly, lest his spirit may not have time to get back into the body, and he may be taken ill. Sometimes petitions are offered to the spirit beseeching it to return to its home. A mother will go to a fork of the path near the house with some tidbit which her sick child was accustomed to relish in health and call plaintively to the spirit:—

> O Spirit, wherever thou hast wandered,
> O Elfin, wherever thou hast strayed,
> Return to thy home,
> Come back to the place of thine abode.

Necklaces are worn not so much for ornament as to give the wandering spirit something to take hold of when it returns to the body.

In keeping with all these practices and ceremonies are to be found some religious and racial conceptions less exalted than those suggested by the noble tradition of the creation and fall and the sayings quoted in connection with it. One story is

that after Father God had created men upon the earth, he observed that they did not multiply and increase as they should. Upon careful inspection he found that a great dragon encircled the entire horizon, and as men multiplied it would open its mouth from time to time and swallow a large part of them. So Father God forged a great spear the head of which weighed seven viss or about twenty-five pounds, and hurled it at the dragon. But the dragon merely said:

"What kind of an insect is that biting me?" Then Father God forged another spear so vast that when he lifted it, the sun in the heaven was obscured for seven days and seven nights. With this he slew the dragon, and from that time on men multiplied on the earth.

Further illustrations of these crude conceptions of God will be given in a later chapter, but in this connection may be mentioned, in contrast with the tradition of the Karen progenitors as being mighty by reason of righteousness, the story of Taw Meh Pah which is very popular among the Karens and has been handed down in various forms. This Taw Meh Pah (the name means Sire of the Boar's Tush), is said to have been the original ancestor of the Karens, corresponding to Abraham for the Jews. One story is to the effect that when he was an old man, his wife died and he went to live with his sons and sons-in-law. He found that a wild boar used to come and destroy their crops. Then

he said to himself, "I haven't much longer to live any way, and a day or two more or less does not amount to much. I will have a go at the boar." So he took his spear and went out in search of the marauder. After a time he succeeded in finding its lair and a tremendous struggle ensued. Taw Meh Pah on his part would make a thrust at the boar with his spear, and the boar would make a dash at him. At length the old man was able to defeat the boar, but he was so thoroughly exhausted by the struggle that he could not take the carcase home and told his sons to go out and fetch it. They went out and looked around, but found nothing, and returning scolded the old man, saying, "Here, old man, you have lied to us. There is no boar there, and we have had all our trouble for nothing." But Taw Meh Pah replied indignantly, "You worthless fellows, when the boar was alive, you dared not even look at it, and now that I have killed it, can't you so much as find the carcase? I will show you where it is." So they went out together to find it. The reason the sons had not been able to find it was that it was so large they had mistaken it for a mountain. Finally with their best efforts they were able to carry home one of the boar's tushes only. Others say that the boar was a magical being, and Taw Meh Pah could not kill it, but he so far overcame it that one of its tushes dropped out, and this they found and took home. Taw Meh Pah sat in the house and made

a comb out of the tush. On combing his hair with it, he found to his astonishment that he had become a young man again. Being a young man, he found himself another wife, lived with her until she grew old and died, combed his hair again and became a young man, found another wife and lived with her until she grew old and died, then combed his hair again and so on. How long he kept up the process no one knows, but it is said that whenever a wife died, he pulled out one of her teeth to remember her by, and when last heard from, he had three bushel basketfuls of the teeth.

This form of the story has probably had many embellishments. Another form which seems to be more ancient, is to the effect that Taw Meh Pah's wife was still living when he killed the boar, and that not only she but all his descendants used the comb and so were no longer subject to sickness and death. As a result of this they multiplied very rapidly, until the land where they were living could no longer support them. Then Taw Meh Pah started out in search of a better country, where the soil should be so rich that, instead of the earth which is dug out of a hole not filling the hole when it is put back in, as is the case in the present abode of the Karen people, it should fill the hole seven times. In his wanderings he came to a great river of flowing sand. On this side of the river the earth would fill its hole four times, but when he reached the other side of the river, he found that

the earth would fill its hole the requisite number of times, seven. Then he returned to take his people to that favored land, but when they had gone a ways, they complained that they were so hungry and tired they must stop a while to eat and rest. So they waited to cook a dinner of snails, as has been mentioned in a previous chapter of this book, and Taw Meh Pah, wearied with waiting, went on ahead, promising to blaze a path for them. He cut down stalks of the plantain or banana tree to mark the way. This grows up very quickly, and so when the people, who were not then familiar with it, came on later, they thought Taw Meh Pah must have gone so far ahead that they could never catch up with him, and they became discouraged and stayed where they are now.

The story thus far is only curious. It seems like a possible reminiscence of the early migrations of the Karen race. Its crudeness is evident. But the account goes on to say that Taw Meh Pah is still watching over his people from that land of seven-fold richness, and when they have sufficiently expiated their sin of disobedience, he will come for them again, and take them to that better abode where they will live in happiness, free from sickness, old age and death.

Here is an element in the story which is of interest in the present connection as showing, even among their cruder conceptions, a strong moral consciousness on the part of the Karen people and

also a dim Messianic hope. Some Christian Karens who have made a study of ancient Karen traditions with a view to discovering in them anything which might indicate an early Scriptual origin, go so far as to see in Taw Meh Pah a likeness to the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, for to the Karens the wild boar instead of the lion would be the king of beasts, there being no fiercer denizen of the forests. But, whatever one may think of this interpretation, this much is clear, that there is nothing debasing either in this story or in the various accounts of God which are given. In fact vileness and immorality seem never to have gotten a strong hold upon the thoughts and ideals of the Karen people, and it has to be said that, notwithstanding their open and professed obedience to Satan, their practices are not as degrading as might be expected. They do not compare in vileness, for instance, with those of the Hindus. The inference is not far to seek, that it is better, from the standpoint of morals and religion, to follow Satan out and out than to hold a debased conception of God. Even though Satan be obeyed, a sense of the presence and power of a holy God may still remain in the background of the consciousness, but if the thought of God himself be perverted, there is nothing left to restrain the soul.

IV

SPECIAL PREPARATION FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL

ALTHOUGH the Karen people forsook their God and betook themselves to the service of Satan, it is satisfying to note that he did not forsake them, but followed them with his mercy, even as he dealt with the Israelites of old. For, as he sent prophets from time to time to the latter to recall them to himself, so he raised up among the Karens those who, it would seem, were truly inspired of him. For it should be borne in mind that even in the Old Testament days there were those, like Melchizedek and Jethro, who, although they did not belong to the chosen race of Abraham and his descendants, were nevertheless truly God's spokesmen before the world. And so it seems not unreasonable to suppose that these Karen prophets were prophets indeed. In no other way is it easy to account for their marvellous and uplifting messages to their people.

And as these prophets rose from time to time, they sought to encourage their people in the midst of their oppressions and afflictions, and they said,

"Children and grandchildren, God will yet save the Karen nation. He will bring deliverance to the Karen people." Sometimes, as in ecstacy, reminding one of the Hebrew prophets of old, they hurled defiance against their ancient foes, exclaiming of Ava, the chief city of the Burmans:—

> The city of Ava says she is great,—
> She is not equal to the heel of God's foot;
> The city of Ava says she is exceedingly great,—
> She is not equal to the sole of God's foot.

Some went on to say how deliverance was to come. "Our younger brother, the white foreigner, will come to us from beyond the setting sun, and will bring back to us our lost book to teach us the way of life. Formerly it was of leather. Now it will be of gold and silver." And some of them went on to describe the appearance of the white foreigner, seeming to see him in vision, and they said, "Our younger brother, the white foreigner, when he comes to us, will be clothed in garments of shining black and shining white." When it is remembered that the Karens seldom wear black in their garments and, although they do wear white, it could never by any stretch of the imagination be thought of as a "shining" white, but is always a very dingy, not to say a dirty, white, the significance of the language becomes evident. Some went on to say further that this younger brother would come wearing a hat like a snail's shell. And to

this day the Karen will occasionally call the attention of the missionary to the hats which are worn by white people in that country, made of pith and cork, exceedingly light and affording an excellent protection against the sun, but with their inverted-chopping-bowl appearance bearing indeed a certain resemblance to a snail's shell.

Incredible as it may seem to some, the prophecies which have been cited appear to have been universally known among the Karens and to have long antedated the coming of the missionary. The writer has been assured of this by members of his own mission who have told him that their own ancestors were priests and uttered these prophecies from time to time with solemn ceremony. Certain it is that among all Karens, heathen as well as Christian, there is a most kindly attitude towards the white man, as towards a younger brother. This can perhaps not be better illustrated than by narrating one or two stories which are current among them.

One, which is evidently intended to account for the superiority of other races over the Karens, relates that once on a time Father God was taken with a mortal illness and sent for his three sons, the Karen Brother, the Burmese brother, and the white brother. The white brother dropped his work and went at once, and Father God was able to impart to him all his wisdom, so that to this day the white brother is able to build ships and do other wonder-

ful things like unto God himself. The Burmese brother delayed for a time, and Father God was able to impart to him less wisdom. The Karen brother was busy in the field and did not get to Father God's bedside until after Father God had died, in fact not until after the body had been burned according to the custom of funerals in that country. There remained only a fragment of the bamboo matting in which Father God had been wrapped, and so to this day the poor Karen has no skill except to weave bamboo mats. But the Karen is not without hope, for the account goes on to say that the younger brother will come some day and impart his wisdom to the Karen brother.

Another story is that one day a Karen took his basket on his back and wandered away into a far country. After many days, he met a white brother and asked him where he was going.

"I am going to worship Father God," said the white brother.

"I would like to go, too," said the Karen.

"Very well, come along," said the white brother, and the two went on together. While they journeyed, the white brother told the Karen that they might not find Father God awake.

"He sleeps seven years, and is awake seven years," said the white brother, "and I really do not know whether it is day or night with him now." After a time, they came to a great wall of rock, and the white brother lifting his staff smote

it, and a portal opened in the rock through which the two went together. Arrived at Father God's abode they found that, surely enough, Father God was asleep. But the white brother, not to be deterred, seized an enormous rattan of the kind which is used for rafting logs on the rivers, and ran it vigorously up and down in Father God's nostrils for the purpose of waking him up. Finding his efforts in vain, he mounted his horse and galloped up and down in Father God's nostrils until Father God sneezed and woke up. Then Father God turned to the white brother, and inquired why he had wakened him so rudely.

"Why," said the white brother, "the Karen brother has come and I thought you would like to see him."

"Oh, is that so?" said Father God, "where is he?" Then the Karen came forward and Father God held a long conversation with him, asking all about his family and surroundings and living conditions. Finally Father God asked:

"What is that you have on your back?"

"My basket," the Karen replied.

"Let me see it," said Father God, and Father God took the basket and filled it with a vast amount of treasure, enough to enrich an entire nation.

"Now," said Father God, putting on the lid tightly, "you must not take off this lid until you get home," and so saying dismissed the Karen brother with his blessing. On the way home the

Karen brother was met by the Burman brother and asked what he had in his basket.

"I do not know," said the Karen brother, "for Father God filled the basket and told me I must not open it until I got home."

"But I want to see," said the Burman brother.

"I will not let you," replied the Karen brother.

"But I will," said the Burman brother, thereupon seizing the basket by force and removing the lid. He took out the contents of the basket, but was not able to put them back again, and so the Karen brother was obliged to return to his home as poor as when he left. But the Karens say that Father God has promised to give them another basket, and some are still looking for it.

The Karens have always been loyal to the white man's government, and when during the third Burmese war in 1886 to 1888, the British forces were engaged in Upper or Northern Burma and some disaffected persons attempted to start insurrections in Lower Burma and carried on a species of guerilla warfare, it was the Karens, mostly Christen Karens, who pursued them in little bands and enabled the British government to keep the situation under control. And when at last the Burmese kingdom was brought to an end by the annexation of its territories by the British and the Burmese king was interned in one of the cities of India as a prisoner of state, none rejoiced more than did they.

It may be of interest to add that, while the Karens were prepared, as indicated above, in a most remarkable degree to receive the bible at the hands of their younger brother, the white foreigner, they were at the same time prevented from accepting any other book. The Burmese had an extensive literature, but these prophecies contained a special warning not to receive the Bedegat or sacred book of the Buddhists, scratched with a pointed stylus on palm leaf.

> "Not these the letters given before,
> Those God will yet again restore,
> These letters we must not receive,
> The golden book alone believe."

And when at last the missionary came with the book, some of the Karens were interested to note the gilt edges of some of the bibles and the leaves white like silver, while more and more they understood that the description given by their prophets applied to the preciousness of the teachings contained, as of silver and of gold.

So it came about that when the missionary found these people, they were fairly standing on the tiptoe of expectation looking eagerly for his coming.

V

EARLY KAREN APOSTLES

ONE can understand how in the circumstances the early triumphs of the gospel among the Karen people were very marked indeed, especially when it is added that, besides what he had already done for them, God inspired some of the earliest disciples among them with truly apostolic fervor. The very first convert, Koh Thah Byu (last syllable pronounced Bew to rhyme with Jew), was such a man. At the outset, he was a most unpromising person. Little is known of his early life. He was born about the year 1778 at a village called Ootwan some four days' journey or eighty miles north of Bassein. He resided with his parents until he was about fifteen years of age, then wandered forth to become a highway robber and bandit. It is supposed from his own confession that he was responsible, either as principal or accessory, for the death of no fewer than thirty persons.

Soon after the first Burmese war, 1822-1824, in which the Tenasserim province was ceded to the British, he visited Rangoon. There he contracted a trifling debt, some $5 or $6 in the currency of

the day, and, not being able to pay it, was seized by his creditor, in accordance with Burmese law, and was made his slave. Shortly after, Maung Shway Bay, one of Dr. Judson's Burmese converts, found the Karen man, paid his debt, thus releasing him from slavery, and brought him to Dr. Judson. The missionary at once began instructing him in the principles of the Christian religion, but he was able to communicate with him through the medium of the Burmese language only which the poor Karen understood indifferently. In any case the latter seems at that time, to have been a rather stupid fellow—at least he is so characterized in Dr. Judson's journal. Very likely he was stupid enough, but, being a Karen, it is not improbable that he appeared to be rather more stupid than he really was, for it is characteristic of the race for a Karen not to appear at his full value. Moreover he had a most terrible temper—"diabolical" is the word by which Dr. Judson who was a very mild man and did not use stronger language than was necessary, described it. So it seemed a long time before the gospel made any impression on the man, but at length it got a grip upon him and performed such a miracle of grace as is sometimes witnessed in more favored lands, when the gospel gets a grip on a man and changes him through and through. It changed Koh Thah Byu through and through, took out of him his heart of stone and gave him a heart of flesh; removed from him his terrible

temper so that he became as meek as a child, and endowed him with a deep insight into the things of God.

For a time the little Burman church that had been gathered was slow to admit this member of a despised race into its fellowship, but at length, seeing proofs of a change of heart which could not be gainsaid, it consented, and appointed a day for the baptism. But before the time arrived Koh Thah Byu decided to accompany Rev. George Dana Boardman to Tavoy. At that place he was accordingly baptized, May 16, 1828, the first convert from among his people.

Koh Thah Byu soon displayed great zeal in preaching the gospel to his own race, and his work was attended with remarkable success. And as Paul sought to preach the gospel from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum where the blessed Name had not so much as been mentioned, so this man beginning at Tavoy and Mergui on the south went preaching the word through Maulmein and Rangoon and Pegu and Bassein until he found his grave on the extreme Arakanese coast. In all these fields he was the pioneer. At first he confined his labors to the immediate neighborhood of Tavoy, visiting Karen villages only one or two days' journey away. Then he made a tour across the mountains on the east to Tshiekku, where he found a company of Karens ignorantly venerating a book which some devout Englishman had given to one

of their number, and which afterward proved to be a copy of the Book of Common Prayer, published at Oxford. At his suggestion, this book, which the people, of course, could not read, but nevertheless kept carefully wrapped in many coverings, was brought to Tavoy to Mr. Boardman, and on its real character being explained to them, they at once ceased to worship it, and accepted the gospel. Koh Thah Byu afterwards visited their village several times and taught school there one or two rainy seasons.

But ever as he labored this devoted follower of the Lord found his heart enlarged within him. He was constantly devising plans for the extension of the work. Once he made an important tour to Mergui. Later he undertook a journey to Siam that he might preach the gospel to the Karens there, but he was turned back by the Siamese officials on the border and not permitted to proceed. During the brief but remarkable missionary career of the consecrated Mr. Boardman he accompanied the latter on his tours, and it is evidence of the esteem in which he was already held that, after the pathetic, yet glorious death of that godly man as he was being borne home in a litter after witnessing the baptism of thirty-four Karens, Koh Thah Byu had resting on him for a time the entire care of the church and the instruction of inquirers. Scarcely was he freed from this obligation, however, when he went to Maulmein, and began with equal vigor

the work of the ministry there. In the spring of 1833, he extended his labors to Rangoon and the Pegu district, achieving there, perhaps, his grandest successes. He visited many villages, and won many converts to Christ. Nor was this work prosecuted without meeting opposition. Rangoon was still under the dominion of the Burmans. The latter determined to use their power for the suppression of the new religion. The Karens were forbidden to learn to read, and at a somewhat later period some actually suffered martyrdom for the cause of Christ. But Koh Thah Byu was fearless in his labors, and notwithstanding persecution, hundreds of Karens boldly took their stand for Christ.

But Koh Thah Byu was already beginning to feel the effects of old age. His arduous and unremitting labors, the privations and hardships he endured, the long fatiguing journeys he made, always on foot and often through pouring rains and swollen streams, brought upon him serious rheumatic trouble. When he heard that Mr. Abbott was to go to Arakan, a British territory on the west, in the hope of reaching the Karens of Bassein from that point, he was ready to accompany him, and actually took up labor there with renewed zeal, but his disease was so far advanced that he could accomplish but little. On the 9th of September, 1840, he went to his reward. The records show that at that time there were about 1,270 members of the churches, most of whom, it is

said, had been converted under his preaching.

Koh Thah Byu was a man of very great power, and, as has been said, of deep insight into the things of God. Not that he ever became a broadly learned man, after the modern acceptation of the term, but when one thinks of much of the learning of these days and of the philosophy falsely so called, one is reminded of the saying of the great American sage, Josh Billings, "It is better not to know so much than to know so many things that aint so." Koh Thah Byu never knew a great many things that are not so, but he knew a few verities with all the intensity of his nature, and his preaching has been described as being like the boring of an augur, round and round and round on a few points until he had drilled them into the minds and hearts of his hearers. He probably could not have made a successful pastor, for his work was distinctly evangelistic. This he did remarkably well, and to this day is known as The Karen Apostle.

Not only in the person of Koh Thah Byu, but in the persons of others as well, God raised up at the very beginning in several of the missions to the Karens, men of like apostolic fervor. Such were Saw Tah Ree and Saw Doo Moo of Shwegyin. Rev. Norman Harris began the work there in the year 1853, reaching the town of Shwegyin one Saturday afternoon. The next morning he gathered the few disciples who had come with him

under an old forsaken shed and preached to them the gospel, taking for his text those wonderful words, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." While he was preaching, a Karen man passing by and attracted by the strange sight, stopped to listen. He had been familiar from childhood up with the traditions of his people and with their expectation of the coming of the younger brother who should bring to them the word of life. But he had wearied of watching for the coming of the brother, and finding nothing in the practices of his people to satisfy the longings of his heart, had turned to Buddhism. He was among the earliest to go to the pagoda to worship in the morning, always taking with him his offering, and he was among the most attentive listeners to the teachings of the pongyees or monks. Yet he found no satisfaction in it all. But when he heard the white man speaking in his own tongue and saw him reading from a book, he believed at once, recognized in the white man the younger brother, and in the book the long-lost book of his people, and accepted the teachings he heard as very manna to his soul. Stealing away unobserved he took his family and friends, and in a few days returned bringing them with him, and seven weeks from that first Lord's Day, the first church of Shwegyin was organized with eight members who had that day been baptized. Saw Tah Ree himself became an evangelist of power among his people.

Saw Doo Moo also was prepared by God in a remarkable manner for the preaching of the gospel among his people. Living some distance to the north of Shwegyin, he rose one morning with his wife and children in their accustomed health, but at sundown that day the wife and all the children except a nursing infant were dead, having been stricken down by that dreadful scourge, the cholera. Distracted with grief, he left the little one in the care of a friendly Burmese woman, and then wandered forth not caring whither he went. For orientals are not without feeling, as is too often supposed. They do not indeed show their emotions on the surface as much as do the people of the west. A congregation will sit and look at the preacher with about as much expression on their faces—to use their own description—as on so many toadstools; but when the preacher hears them refer to his sermon a year or, perhaps, five or ten years after, he feels that it has somehow gotten a hold upon them. Yes, the oriental has as deep feelings as have others, and so Saw Doo Moo left the nursing infant and wandered forth in the grief and anguish of his heart not caring whither he went; rose early in the morning and went on all day long, stopping wherever night overtook him, rose again early the next day, and wandered on, week after week, until at last he was found by some Christian Karens down near Mergui, hundreds of miles away from his home. He told

them the story of his grief, and they on their part told him of the balm in Gilead. He believed. His wounded heart was healed. He returned as far as Maulmein, entered the little school which the missionaries had prepared for the training of evangelists, learned to read, studied the Scriptures, and when Mr. Harris went to Shwegyin to found the mission there, or soon after, he was ready to go with him, and largely through the preaching of these two men, Saw Tah Ree and Saw Doo Moo, during the first year of Mr. Harris's ministry on that field, there were no fewer than five hundred and seventy-seven converts.

Saw Quah Lah was an evangelist who in the beginning of the Toungoo mission met with even greater success. It is said that through his efforts nearly two thousand converts were gathered into the churches. He did a great work, and for a time was highly respected. Later he fell into sin, and had to be excluded from the fellowship of the church. He made full and humble confession and gave evidence of the deepest penitence. He was restored to the fellowship of the church, but was not permitted to partake again in the work of the ministry. The whole affair was a cause of great grief to the disciples but it had a partially compensating advantage, for it taught the new converts that the moral demands of the Christian religion were high and not to be lightly tampered with.

VI

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK

IT IS difficult to transport oneself in imagination to the early beginnings of the work among the Karen people, and to conceive of the immense enthusiasm which prevailed on the part of both the missionaries and the converts. At first the missionaries attempted to reach the Karens through the medium of the Burmese language, and they have been subjected to considerable criticism because they did not continue to do so. Some of the Karens, especially of the men, already understood Burmese, and it has been thought by many that, if the missionaries had disregarded the Karen language, which was the dialect of a comparatively insignificant people, this would have tended greatly to the unification and strengthening of the entire work in Burma. Aside from the fact that any people is most effectively approached through its own tongue, it would probably have been quite practicable to continue the work among the Karens through the Burmese language. Even to this day, in the missions to the Brecks and Bwehs and other

small Karen tribes of the Toungoo field, no attempt is being made to translate the Scriptures into the different dialects of the people. Religious work among them is carried on through the medium of the Sgaw dialect of the Karen language, which is practically a foreign language to many of them. Sgaw is taught in the schools, but among the churches it is customary for the pastors to read the Scriptures in Sgaw and then preach and pray in the language of their people. Similarly, it would probably have been quite possible for the missionaries to teach Burmese in their schools, content themselves with the excellent translation which Dr. Judson had made of the bible into that tongue, and let the native pastors put into the vernacular from time to time whatever was necessary for the edification of the more ignorant of their people.

This, apparently, is precisely what the missionaries started out to do; but special circumstances arose which seemed to make it imperative for them to pursue a different course. As has been said, Koh Thah Byu was baptized May 16, 1828. It was not until June, 1831, that Rev. Jonathan Wade, who had been in the country since 1823, went from Maulmein on a preaching tour to the Karen village of Tah Kreh. He was accompanied by an interpreter and had evidently made no attempt, up to that time, to acquire the Karen language. At the sight of the white stranger the villagers, who supposed that he was a government

official of some sort, all took to their heels and fled to the surrounding jungle. After he and the interpreter had waited patiently for quite a long time, an old man appeared, and the interpreter called to him, saying that they were not government officials but preachers who had come to tell them of the new religion. After considerable persuasion he succeeded in allaying the old man's fears and getting him to call the other villagers back to their homes. Then all the people gathered around and listened to the message which Mr. Wade had to bring. But all unexpectedly an old man from the company spoke up and asked Mr. Wade for the book. At first Mr. Wade did not understand what the man meant, and asked him what book he wanted.

"The Karen book," said the man.

"But the Karens have never had a book," said Mr. Wade, "and how can I give you one?

"Not so, O Teacher," replied the Karen man, proceeding to tell the story of the lost book as it has already been rehearsed in these pages. "We Karens once had a book of leather, but we lost it, and the elders tell us that when the white man comes he will bring us our lost book, and then we shall prosper. Now the white man has come, but where is our book? If you bring us our book, we will welcome you. If not, you must go back and fetch it." This insistent demand on the part of the Karen people in accordance with their tradi-

tions seemed to make it necessary that the missionaries, if they would do a really effective work among them, should give them the bible in their own vernacular. This it was which decided them to reduce the Karen language to writing. Mr. Wade is said to have accomplished this feat before he himself had learned to speak it. Those who are familiar with its ear-teasing consonants and complicated system of vowel tones wonder how he did it. It stands today as a monument to his genius. He adapted the Burmese alphabet to the expression of Karen sounds, and produced a system of writing which is purely phonetic. Some have wondered that he did not adapt the Roman alphabet instead, but this is easily explained. Some Karen sounds defy expression with Roman letters, to begin with, and a Karen who had already learned to read Burmese could readily pass from that to Karen, while on the other hand, if he learned first to read his own language, he could easily pick up the Burmese; and to the average Karen, Burmese must, for many generations, be of much more value than English.

The language vehicle having been determined upon, the next thing in order was to produce a literature. Among the first books to be translated was, of course, the bible. This great task was undertaken by Dr. Mason, and an excellent version from the original tongues was produced. An anthology worthy to grace any language was pre-

pared, over two hundred hymns, remarkably true to the idiom of the language and to the genius of the Karen people, issuing from the pen of the first Mrs. Vinton alone. A Karen who seems to have had an extraordinarily comprehensive knowledge of his own language, people and customs, was found, and, although the Karen is thought of as having a rather meager vocabulary, yet with his assistance and at his dictation, a compendium of Karen terms and ideas was compiled in five thick volumes, called The Karen Thesaurus, which has not been surpassed to this day and deserves to rank almost as an encyclopedia. Spelling books were prepared, and arithmetics, geographies, astronomies and other books in great number. Schools were almost from the beginning a necessity, demanded by the people themselves, for as soon as a Karen adopts the Christian religion, he wants two things, first, to acquire knowledge, second, to improve his physical surroundings. Children and adults sat on the same forms and studied out of the same book unashamed. To this day, they seem almost to think that to be able to read is part of being a Christian, for seldom does a Karen turn to the Christian religion but in some way he manages to acquire at least a knowledge of the alphabet. Schools for primary instruction were early started at Maulmein and Tavoy, to be followed later by schools of higher grade as the need arose. Very soon the necessity for the special training of evangelists and

pastors being felt, in 1845 Rev. J. G. Binney, D. D., opened at Maulmein the Theological Seminary which was subsequently removed to Rangoon, and is now located at Insein, doing an important work.

From the account of Koh Thah Byu, it will be seen that for many years missionary operations among the Karens were of necessity largely confined to the provinces which were under British rule. Much was secretly accomplished in the neighborhood of Rangoon, to be sure, and in the year 1840, Rev. E. L. Abbott opened a very successful mission at Sandoway for the purpose of reaching the Karen refugees who fled from the Bassein district to escape Burmese oppression; but little else could be accomplished. In 1852, however, a war broke out between the Burmans and the British, as a result of which a large portion of the former Burmese kingdom, including practically all the territory inhabited by Karens, was ceded to the British.

Very soon after the opening of hostilities, the city of Rangoon was taken, and at once Rev. J. H. Vinton—the illustrious head of an illustrious family of which no fewer than nine members have seen service on the foreign field—hastened to the city that he might minister to the needs of the destitute and suffering Karens. He found that every Karen village within fifty miles had been destroyed, and that five thousand Karen refugees were living in carts and under trees within seven miles of the

city. Their standing crops were burned, and their stores of rice were either seized or destroyed. The Burmans, supposing the Karens to be secret friends of the British invaders, had tortured and killed men, women and children with ingenious brutality and unspeakable cruelty. Two native preachers had been crucified besides having sharp pointed stakes driven down their throats. Some of the victims had been slowly cut to pieces joint by joint, or limb by limb, through successive days, while others had been fastened to crosses and then set adrift upon rafts that their death agonies might be aggravated by the sight of cooling water. It was discovered that many of the Karen disciples had been driven at the point of the spear into the front ranks of the Burmese army to fight the British. After they had fallen, pierced by the bullets of those whom in their hearts they were welcoming, portions of the Scriptures were found concealed on their persons.

With the close of the war came greatly enlarged opportunities for work among the Karens, opportunities of which the missionaries were the better able to avail themselves because of the many years of waiting and preparation. Pentecostal blessings attended Mr. Vinton's efforts at Rangoon. The mission at Sandoway, already prosperous, was removed to Bassein and there received an impetus which placed it easily in the lead of the missions to the Karens. The stations at Henzada, Toun-

goo and Shwegyin were all opened in the year 1853. The first mentioned was inaugurated by Rev. B. C. Thomas, a man of indomitable energy whose overflowing spirits are still remembered with affection by the Karens. The mission at Toungoo was opened by Dr. Mason, ably assisted by Saw Quah Lah, the native evangelist already mentioned, under whose ministry twenty-eight churches were organized. In the Shwegyin mission, the story of the founding of which by Rev. Norman Harris has already been told in part, the first year saw the organization of six churches.

In all these fields not only were churches organized and gathered into associations, but from the beginning all the activities proper to a well-regulated Christian community were adopted. Karen pastors were chosen and placed in charge of the churches. Schools were started, the station school under the direct oversight of the missionary and village schools as fast as teachers could be supplied. Missions, both home and foreign, were instituted and evangelists sent out to various parts. At the very first meeting of the Shwegyin association, for instance, four men were appointed to evangelize the far-off regions of Northern Siam. Throughout the whole Karen community, converts were gathered by hundreds and thousands, and for a time it seemed that the entire people would be Christianized, fulfilling the prophecy that a nation shall be born in a day.

VII

HINDRANCES

THE work was not to be without hindrances. The early promise was not to be fully realized. Not only did the large ingatherings cease, but, for a time, many went back. It is probably an almost universal experience that, when converts are made in large numbers, there follows a period of reaction. Such is the case even in Europe and America, as witness the Welsh revival under Evan Roberts. Those early Karen disciples were very ignorant. It is said that they knew two things only, first, that their book had been brought back to them, and second, that they had no need to fear the evil spirits, for Jesus was stronger than the evil spirits. That was enough for salvation, and many no doubt died triumphant in that simple faith, but it was not enough for the highest efficiency in the Christian life. This very ignorance of the early disciples rendered them liable to be easily led astray, and in the pioneer years of the Karen missions there were defections which could hardly have taken place after the converts had become more intelligently established

in Christian truth. Fortunately there were sayings of the elders handed down from ancient times which served in some measure to hold the people to their new-found hope. One ran as follows:—

"Children and grandchildren, in the latter days many different faiths will arise. Be not led about hither and thither by them. When you find one that does away with the whisky still, that is good enough. Stick to it." The consequence is that any form of religion which does not discountenance drinking, even though it may profess to be Christian, is likely to have little hold upon them.

Moreover some heathen customs have always made it very difficult for a Karen to leave his family and become a Christian. For instance in connection with the ceremony already mentioned of eating a pig when some one has been taken ill, if the family circle should be broken by the refusal of one member of the family to be present, and the sick person should die, the blame for it would be laid on the recalcitrant member. Not that the Christian need care for that, but as a Christian, he must have consideration for the consciences of others and not impose his convictions upon them. On this account it has sometimes happened that a person who fully intended to become a Christian, will first wait to perform certain heathen ceremonies by means of which it is supposed that he can forever sever himself from all the obligations of his former faith. Too often the delay has

proved fatal. The person himself has died, or, overpersuaded by others, he has lost his interest in the new religion and has gone back forever to the old.

Very early evil-minded persons began to circulate malicious stories about the white foreigner and his religion. The writer remembers one such story which became current in his childhood regarding his father, and was doubtless believed by many of the naturally credulous among the heathen Karens. It ran about as follows:—

"An old Karen lay at the point of death. Calling his children about him, he spoke to them as follows: 'My dear children, I have something to tell you. When Teacher Harris came here, I was one of his first and most zealous followers. I had perfect confidence in him and did everything he said without doubt or question. But when he had made about a dozen converts, he invited us to take a ride with him in his boat. He took us down the river and out to sea. There a great and wonderful ship awaited us with sails which were like wings and carried it faster than any ship we had ever seen before, faster even than the fastest clouds. The room which he occupied was luxuriously furnished and decorated with gold and silver. After sailing for many, many days, the ship stopped in its course near an island. Bye and bye, it began to be rumored that here on this island lived the Daw T'kah, a great monster which de-

lights to devour human flesh. And surely enough, the Daw T'kah himself soon came on board to bargain for us, and when he had poured out a roomful of gold for the teacher, he scooped the disciples off the deck into his bag with one hand as you would gather grains from a winnowing tray, and returned to his home. Fortunately for me, when I saw what was about to happen, I slipped out of sight and dropped into the hold of the ship. There I was able to secrete myself until I knew we were well on our way home. Then I became very hungry and was forced to leave my hiding place. I threw myself at the teacher's feet, and begged him to spare my life. At first he was very angry, and threatened to kill me with the most horrible cruelties, but after much entreaty on my part he finally consented to spare me on one condition. I was to keep all that I had seen a profound secret as long as I lived, and in the meantime was to use all my influence in getting more converts for him. I have kept my promise faithfully, for I knew that if I did not, the teacher would devise the most excruciating tortures for me. But now I am about to die, and I can keep the terrible secret no longer. Listen to what I say. Beware, beware of these Christian teachers!' "

So when Kahchur, a Karen boy, was taken to America to be educated, many of his heathen neighbors professed to believe during his long absence that the missionary had fed him to the Daw

T'kah, and declared their intention if ever Kahchur returned, to become Christians and worship his God. When, however, Kahchur indeed returned, went among them and urged them to keep their pledge, they refused to believe that he was the real Kahchur, saying that he was a clever substitute.

But a far more serious obstacle to the acceptance of the gospel by the Karens than any of these has ever been their essential antagonism to Christianity because of the high morality which it demands, this in spite of their own comparatively high moral standards. The human heart is the same the world over, and the real hindrances to the spread of the gospel are singularly alike among all races of men. In general, the acceptance of Christianity is not so much a matter of the head as of the heart. Especially among so simple-minded a race as the Karens, it is not particularly difficult to convince people of the truth of the Christian religion. There is that in the gospel which compels conviction so that with very little preaching they admit its truth and confess its claims. But the missionary may say to the heathen Karen today:

"You admit the truth of this religion; you acknowledge that you ought to become a Christian. Then why do you not?" what will the answer be? Perhaps one would naturally expect him to say:

"I do not know enough about your religion." But such is not the case. He will say:

"If I become a Christian, I will have to give up drinking, and card-playing, and theatre-going, and dancing. And I do not want to." For—whatever may be the case in more enlightened countries and among a more civilized people—even among the heathen Karens these practices are not considered consistent with a Christian profession, although it might not be easy to prove that they are more debasing than are the corresponding practices among the people of the west. They have their intoxicating liquors, vile smelling to be sure, but palatable to their lips. They have their theatres certainly cruder and more childish, but possibly no more immoral than some theatrical performances tolerated in American cities. Of dancing there are various kinds. The Karen is little more than a slow walk. The Burmese is a kind of posturing which looks as senseless to the westerner as perhaps the westerner's does to the oriental, while to the oriental his own mode of dancing probably appears to be the more modest, as men and women do not dance together. All these things are recognized by the heathen themselves as being entirely proper for heathen, but improper and unsuitable for Christians; and here is one of the chief obstacles to their acceptance of Christianity.

The incoming of different faiths has been a source of perplexity to some. A Karen once said to the writer:

"What are we to believe? Our fathers taught us one thing; they told us that there is a God who made the heavens and the earth, but they did not worship him. The Burmese Buddhists tell us that there is no God, or at least, that we can know nothing about him. The Hindus believe something else. And even when you white people come to us, you do not agree among yourselves, but have your different churches, such as the Roman Catholic and the Protestant. How can we tell which religion we ought to accept?"

"Oh," said the missionary in reply, "I grant you there are many faiths but there are only two roads. If you are going along one road, you cannot go along another at the same time. If you wish to follow the other road, you have to leave the first one. Now, tell me, if you follow the old Karen road may you drink?"

"Oh, yes," said the man, "that is part of the ceremony."

"If you become a Buddhist, may you still drink?"

"Yes."

"And do you worship idols and venerate the monks?"

"Yes."

"And if you become a Hindu or a Roman Catholic, is it the same?"

"Yes."

"Do you not see, then, that that is all the same

road? But if you become a true Christian, can you still drink?"

"No."

"Can you still worship idols or venerate the monks?"

"No."

"This, you see, is a different road, and it is perfectly easy for any one to discriminate between the two. You know whether it is right to drink and make a beast of yourself or not. You know perfectly well whether it is right to set up a stone and worship it instead of the God who created all things. You know whether or not it is right to venerate the monks who say it is wrong to take animal life and yet eat meat." The man had nothing more to say.

Another hindrance to the progress of the gospel among the Karens which has not been generally recognized but has doubtless been very real has been the rise among them, from time to time, of false prophets and leaders. The very fact that Karens are naturally religious has rendered them the more susceptible to suggestions of this kind. In the olden days there was little opportunity for this sort of thing, but as the Karens came into contact with the other faiths of Buddhism on the one hand and Christianity on the other, some imbibed a little of both and introduced what they proclaimed as new cults. These had enough of truth blended with their superstition to appeal

strongly to the Karen people, and some of them gained considerable heathen followings.

The latest and most prominent of these leaders was Koh Sah Yay, a man who, for a time, gained an influence among his people which was truly remarkable. Born near Papun in the eastern part of the Shwegyin field, it is said that at one time he attended the mission school at Shwegyin, but if that is the case, his schooling must have been very brief indeed, for he never learned to read. Arrived at young manhood he married, but in a short time his wife and little one died. In the sorrow of his bereavement he betook himself to the solitude of the jungle to live the life of a hermit. He was discovered in this condition half dead from starvation. Owing to the influence of Buddhism, the people of the country generally have great respect for the ascetic, and so some began to pay reverence to Koh Sah Yay. Later he made his headquarters on the summit of a mountain rising to the east of Shwegyin at a distance of about twenty-five miles. Here he had a sort of temple built for himself. It was situated on an enormous pyramidal boulder at the very crown of the peak. The posts of the building had to be lashed down to the sides of the rock with great bamboo withes. During the dry season, which in Burma lasts for six months, every drop of water used for drinking or for bathing and culinary purposes had to be brought in bamboo joints from far down the mountain side on the

backs of men and women. Of course to take anything else there was an equally arduous task. Frail bamboo bridges were built across yawning chasms, and ladders made of bamboo and rattan were placed on the face of precipitous rocks to make the spot accessible. Yet here his followers flocked in ever increasing numbers until the ever-watchful government became suspicious of the movement and feared that a rebellion might be started. Koh Sah Yay was therefore advised to come down to the plains. Accordingly he applied for a large tract of untilled land, and, moving there, gathered his followers about him and urged them to bring the land under cultivation. In this way he built up quite a good sized village.

About this time Koh Sah Yay professed conversion to Christianity and was baptized together with nearly two hundred of his followers. It frequently happens that when leading men among the heathen become Christians, their influence over their heathen neighbors ceases, but this was not the case with Koh Sah Yay. He visited Rangoon, Bassein, Henzada and Tharrawaddy and his following increased apace. Great crowds of people flocked to him, and through his influence hundreds and even thousands professed Christianity and were received into the membership of the churches. For a time the movement seemed to give promise of being a great power for good. Koh Sah Yay himself declared that it was his humble mission to bring the

people together and give the preachers who had been educated and had enjoyed privileges such as had been denied him, an opportunity to deliver the gospel message. Meanwhile he collected vast sums of money from the people, and erected great buildings at various centers. What these buildings were really intended for was somewhat problematical. They were much larger than could ever be required for legitimate Christian work. Koh Sah Yay himself represented that they were simply for the accommodation of the people when they assembled for worship, but some declared that they were to be courts and palaces for Koh Sah Yay when he should be appointed and established by God as the Karen Messiah. For while, as has been said, the Karens are universally loyal to the British government, there have been, from time to time, some among the heathen who thought that God by unseen, spiritual, or rather, supernatural power would one day set up the Karen people above their neighbors. At the best, the erection of so great buildings to no sufficient purpose seemed more in accordance with the Buddhist than with the Christian ideal. For the Buddhist puts up a pagoda or a rest house or digs a well purely as an act of merit regardless of its probable usefulness, but the words of Jesus, "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost," have often enough been dwelt upon to show his repugnance to waste, though few realize that here is to be found one of the

really great distinguishing features of his religion.

After some years, Koh Sah Yay took to himself a wife, and his influence waned, for Buddhistic ideals, including reverence for celibacy, have more or less permeated the minds of all the non-Christian populations of the country. A child was born to him under a banyan tree, held sacred by the Buddhists because Gautama attained to Buddhaship under such a tree. He hoped that in the birth of this child he would be rehabilitated in the veneration of the people, but the expected son and successor proved to be a daughter, and from that time Koh Sah Yay's power steadily declined. It was not long before his dead body was found in a well. How he came to his death is not known, but it is thought by some that becoming despondent because of his diminishing popularity and oppressed by the enormous debts which he had contracted in his various enterprises, he committed suicide. Many of his followers expected him to rise again after forty days, and notwithstanding their disappointment in this respect, some have endeavored to continue the cult, but with steadily diminishing success.

The whole movement was certainly a strange one, and it is perhaps still too early to estimate it at its true value. Koh Sah Yay's career resembles in some regards that of Alexander Dowie. Unlike the latter, he never professed to heal diseases, lived in a very unpretentious manner, dressed in

simple clothing—usually white cotton cloth—and ate plain food. But in some way he acquired such an influence over his people that many of them sold all their property and mortgaged their houses and lands, impoverishing themselves, in order that they might give the money to him. How he acquired this influence it is difficult to explain fully, just as in the case of the founder of Zion City. But it seems probable that while Koh Sah Yay himself may have been a sincere Christian, his mind was perhaps a little deranged, the movement got beyond his control, and he did not perceive its true drift. The movement itself seems to have been built up on superstition, and having this as a basis could not stand. Certain it is that by far the great majority of those who professed conversion to Christianity under its influence have now gone back to heathenism. It seems likely that this and similar movements among the heathen that preceded it, have been a real detriment to the cause of the gospel.

These are a few of the hindrances to the progress of Christianity among the Karens. It should be said, however, that they have proved in some ways to be helps. They have served to toughen the fiber of the sincere disciples and produce a royal race, hardy, keen of vision, quick to discriminate between the true and the false, and ready for every good word and work.

VIII

PRESENT ATTAINMENTS IN PERSONAL RELIGION.

SOME of the hindrances to the progress of the work have been mentioned. Instead of continuous and rapid growth such as seemed likely at the first, there was in nearly or quite all of the Karen fields or missions a set-back. These early gains had to be consolidated. The chaff had to be separated from the wheat; the sincere and the insincere converts had to be differentiated and the latter weeded out. This was a long and tedious process. For twenty or thirty years in most of the missions little or no progress was recorded; the love of many grew cold. The heart of the missionary was often pained as he saw those who at one time showed much promise, give up their faith and go back into the blackness of darkness. At length, however, a change came. The days of ignorance gave way before experiential knowledge of the truth and the disciples became established in the faith. From that time on there has been steady growth.

How great the progress has been may perhaps be judged in no better way than by comparing the

convert of the present day with the experienced disciple. In general it may be said that the converts from heathenism know little about Christ. This is perhaps not quite what one would expect. The missionary is supposed to preach primarily "the unsearchable riches of Christ"; and some indeed do so. They preach Christ to the rawest heathen, who may never have heard of the Christian religion before. The writer has no criticism of such; they may be quite right in doing so. He merely tells what he has himself observed when he says that few converts from heathenism seem to know or to be capable of comprehending anything of the work of Christ. They know only of worshipping God. They have done with following Satan. They realize the folly of that, and desire to turn to Father God and serve him. This is about all the real experience they have, and even this may be vague and dim. The explanation of the whole phenomenon is probably that, while the convert from heathenism is too ignorant clearly to differentiate Christ from God, yet it is Christ in God, that is, the Christian conception of God as he hears it from Christian preachers, that attracts him.

A heathen Karen will sometimes make up his mind to worship God. To all intents and purposes, he is already a converted man. But he will say nothing to any one about his intention lest the evil spirits may get wind of it and be offended.

There is a process, however, by which even the heathen may put an end to their connection with the evil spirits. The writer does not know what it is, but infers from accounts that it involves a course of feasting. He has heard of heathen who tired of performing their religious ceremonies, and so went through this process and still remained heathen, steadfastly refusing to worship God. In like manner, the convert will sometimes wait to go through this process, which may take a year. When it is complete, he will acknowledge his intention and ask to be baptized; but it is evident that he has not fully escaped from the power of his old superstitions, and, as has been said, he knows little about Christ. He thinks only of turning to God. Nor has he any deep sense of sin. It is only after Karens have been converted from heathenism for a good while that they develop that, and as that deepens, their understanding and appreciation of the work of Christ also increases.

It may be of interest to note here that the heathen are seldom led to embrace Christianity by considerations of temporal benefit. As has already been pointed out, the early Karen disciples believed that they need no longer fear the evil spirits, because Jesus was stronger than the evil spirits. To this day this opinion prevails even among the heathen. In view of the constant fears with which the latter are surrounded one might think that this would be a strong inducement to them to become

Christians. But such is rarely the case. The spiritual element in Christianity stands out so prominently that few can adopt it and hold to it permanently, who have not experienced a real change of heart. It is self-guarding, like the ark of the covenant. The story is told of a heathen who was haunted by an evil spirit. He never saw it himself, but sometimes when he was in the house sitting by the hearth, or at night when he was abroad, it would suddenly appear to others, plainly visible at his side. This gave him an uncanny reputation, so that people avoided him and did not welcome him to their homes. At length, knowing the reputed power of the foreign religion, he determined to escape from the malignant influence which had possession of him by becoming a Christian. He accordingly sought out an ordained evangelist and applied for baptism. He managed to pass such catechetical examination as was required, and was baptized. From that moment the apparition disappeared, and for two years the man lived in peace and enjoyed the confidence and companionship of his fellows. But at the end of that time the restraints of the new religion became irksome. He longed for the leeks and the onions and the garlick of Egypt; his soul craved the old indulgences, and he went back to his heathen practices. Then the apparition appeared at his side again, and continued to do so from time to time until his death, for he never returned to the better faith.

Of course the writer cannot vouch for the truth of the story, although it is told in all seriousness and is circulated among Christians and heathen alike. But that part of it which relates to the man's return to heathenism notwithstanding the great incentive to remain a nominal Christian is at least true to human nature.

Over against this story, as showing how sincere hearts may be drawn back to a dominating faith even in most adverse circumstances, may be set the incident which the writer has heard of an old man and his wife who lived for many years in a Christian village and professed to be Christians and had indeed lived upright, consistent lives. But bye and bye, their children were taken from them one by one by death. Then Satan came and tempted them, just as he tempts God's children in other lands when he gets them at a disadvantage. And they said:

"Here we have been professing Christians for all these years, and this is all we have gotten for it —our children have been taken from us one by one unto the last. We can stand it no longer!" And so they took their few possessions, perhaps not more than would go into a little bag such as the Karens carry suspended from the shoulder, probably, at most, not more than would go into a basket of the kind they carry upon their backs, and betook themselves to a heathen village, intending to spend there the remainder of their days.

For among these people Christians and heathen do not live together in the same village. If a heathen wants to become a Christian, he leaves his heathen village and goes to live in a Christian village, and contrariwise, if a Christian wearies of his religion and wishes to go back into heathenism, he leaves the Christian village, and goes and lives in a heathen village. Or, if Christians and heathen live in the same village, as may sometimes be necessary, the Christians live in a part by themselves and the heathen in another part by themselves. So this man and his wife went to live in a heathen village. But when they got there, the heathen said to them:

"Sing us some of the songs of Zion," and they said it, not tauntingly as the Babylonians of old said it to the Israelites, but because they really wished to listen. And as well as they could, for their voices were cracked and had never been very good, the aged couple recalled some of the hymns which they had learned back there in the Christian village, and they sang them. Ever as they sang the heathen said:

"How good that is!" When they had finished singing, the heathen asked them about the teachings which they had learned back there in the Christian village. And, as well as they could, for they had never been trained to express themselves very much, they recalled the blessed gospel story, and as they told it, the heathen said:

"How good that is! How very good that is!" Then the old man and his wife turned each to the other and said:

"If the very heathen think so much of our religion, it is not time for us to turn our backs upon it." So they gathered together again their few possessions, returned to the Christian village, and spent there the remainder of their days in the fear and service of God.

The attitude of the Christians towards the heathen and their intense yearning over them are so tender and patient as to be pathetic. The writer remembers to have heard a Karen pastor tell of an evangelistic trip which he, in company with some missionary ladies and teachers and pupils from a school, had made over a week-end among nearby heathen villages. It was easy to see that the tour had been far from pleasant. The visitors had been received with a good deal of coldness, and sharp, stinging remarks had been made by the heathen at the expense of those who had come to preach to them. But the pastor, in narrating the experience, made light of that. He said:

"When a man is ill, you bring him his usual food, and he has no appetite for it. Then you get him some special delicacy which you think he will surely like, but he turns away from it in disgust. You try one thing after another, but your efforts are only met with scorn. Yet you do not get angry with him, for you know it is because he is so very

KARENS OF MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

ill that he has no desire for food. And so, although the heathen did not receive us kindly, we were not angry, for it only shows how very ill they are." The Karen Christians are eager for the conversion of the Burmese, those who used formerly to be their persecutors. Their efforts on their behalf are unceasing. Would that they were more successful! As it is, not a few Burmese are members of Karen churches. These are for the most part Burmese who have lived in the vicinity of Karen Christians, and, although Burmese generally despise Karens, have seen their exemplary Christian lives, and have been led to become Christians themselves.

The real inner experience of any people is a difficult matter to trace, especially if it be that of a race who, like the Karens, have never been accustomed to express themselves along those lines. General confessions of sin one will hear frequently, to be sure. Before every observance of the Lord's Supper it is customary among all the churches to have a preparatory service in which the members are expected to confess to one another their spiritual condition, settle any differences, and put themselves as far as may be into a fitting frame for the observance of the sacred ordinance. At these meetings one will hear so much of acknowledgment of failure and sin, so little expression of helpful experiences, that one wearies of listening to it. To get into the deeper heart life of the Karen disciples

one must be content to wait and watch and listen. When he has once fully gained their confidence, perhaps by some campfire in the jungles, the conversation will turn undirected to the subject of the inner life, and then it will come out.

There was a dear old man. The writer had just been to his village, the farthest Christian village in his field, nearly a whole day's journey over a long, high mountain beyond the village just preceding, to which he had been. He was starting back over this same high mountain when this dear old man seized the heaviest thing he had. For in touring in that country there are no hotels where one can put up or anything of the kind and the missionary is obliged to take with him everything he is likely to require, beds, bedding, cooking utensils, tents and so forth. The missionary had no elephants or other beasts of burden with him at the time, so that everything had to be carried by hand. He and the old Karen man had reached their destination, and had seated themselves and were resting a while, when the missionary asked the old man what his name was. It was not particularly strange that he should not know it, for Karens never think of introducing one another by name. However, the old man said reproachfully:

"Why, doesn't the Teacher know my name? They used to call me Too Loo Koo's father, but now they call me Miss Fragrance's father." For it is a singular custom which the people of those

parts have of calling a person after the name of his oldest living child. So, when the old man said, "They used to call me Too Loo Koo's father, but now they call me Miss Fragrance's father," the missionary knew what it meant—there had been a death in his little family.

Then the old man went on to tell about Too Loo Koo, his first-born, a son, and how his fatherly affections had twined ever more and more closely about the little one. And when he got to be ten or twelve years of age, his father sent him down to the station school at Shwegyin.

"For," said he, "I always wanted to preach, but I was never able because I was too ignorant, but I wanted this son of mine to be educated so that when he grew up he might go and preach in my stead." So the little fellow was growing pretty well into young manhood—in his father's story—perhaps sixteen or eighteen years of age, when the missionary saw tears in the old man's eyes and his chin began to quiver, as he said:

"But Teacher, the Lord took him, the Lord took him." In a moment, however, the chin ceased to quiver, and there came over the dear old man's face such a look of heavenly resignation as only the saints of God can know, as he added:

"But it is all right, Teacher. It is all right. There is no rebellion in my heart, for it was the Lord that did it."

It is blessed to note how graciously God some-

times deals with even the most ignorant and benighted. The missionary was asked to go to the hospital to see a young man who had just been brought in. He found a most pitiful spectacle, a youth of from sixteen to eighteen years of age whose eyes had been scratched out by a bear. He had been out in the jungle with some companions of his when the bear appeared. The rest were fortunate enough to make their escape, but this poor fellow climbed up into a tree, the branch to which he clung broke, letting him fall to the ground, and the bear, after the custom of its kind, made a dash for his face, scratched at it with its long claws, and then ran off. The other men, realizing the terrible plight of their comrade, hastily put him into a small native boat and brought him down the twenty miles or so to the city. The sight of both eyes was completely destroyed. The young man said he wished he could die. The missionary, seeing his condition, did not wonder that he felt so. He did what he could for the youth, and went away. Soon after, he was obliged to take his furlough home, and saw and heard nothing more about the young man for two years or more. Then he learned that, although his physical vision had been destroyed, his spiritual eyes had been opened, for he had become a most faithful and devoted Christian. Before he lost his sight, he had had few advantages, for he was a heathen and had known only a heathen home. He had never learned

to read, and knew nothing of the bible story or of Christian singing. Now, in his blindness, he had turned to God, he consorted with God's people, and he sought to walk in the ways of righteousness. Ever when the gong sounded for services, he would grope his way to the chapel, take his seat near the preacher, and listen attentively to the instruction that was given. When the people sang, he would join as well as he could in the singing; and when the time came for prayer, he would raise his voice and offer his petition, at first with broken utterance, but with more and more of freedom as he acquired practice. So, little by little, his knowledge and understanding grew, and his testimony was so spontaneous, so cheerful and so full of gratitude that it was a source of strength and encouragement to the little church with which he worshipped and into the membership of which he was baptized.

But, after a time, there was a change. The travelling evangelist who visited the place occasionally found that the young man was not in his accustomed place, and made inquiries regarding him. No one seemed to know quite what the trouble was, and so the evangelist went to see the young man in person, and asked him why he was no longer frequenting the place of prayer as formerly, and why his voice was not raised in petition as it had been before.

"Teacher," said the young man, "I would like

to go to the house of God as aforetime, and join in the singing and the prayers. My heart is not changed, or my desire for these things diminished. But, whenever I bow my head to pray, Satan comes with a host of his friends and he threatens to kill me, and I dare not pray." The evangelist was a wise man, and, as he reflected, he thought it likely that the young brother was suffering from hallucinations occasioned by his blindness, that being unable to see his thoughts had turned in upon himself until his mind had become partly unbalanced, but after a moment's deliberation he turned to the young man and said to him:

"Brother, let me make to you a suggestion. When you want to pray again, bow your head, and call on Jesus to help you, and tell Satan you are going to pray any way, even if he kills you." The evangelist went away and was gone for several weeks. When he returned, he found that the young man had resumed his former place with the people of God and was joining in prayer and praise as heartily as before. When he could, he asked him of the matter, and the young man replied:

"Teacher, I did just as you said I should. I bowed my head, and I called upon the name of Jesus, and I defied Satan and all his hosts, and he took flight, and I have seen nothing of him from that day to this."

Surely, if the fellowship of the saints means anything, it is entirely possible for the Christian of

America to have fellowship with the Karen Christians of Burma at the present day, for they have like precious hope in the gospel, the same consolations of the Spirit, and the same source of power. The writer would never feel the necessity of returning to the homeland for the sake of enjoying Christian fellowship, for he can find it in Burma among the Karen disciples in just as rich and abundant and satisfying measure as he can find it anywhere. Many of the pastors of churches are truly men of God, and the missionary soon learns to take counsel with them and to value their helpful advice. Most of them are better versed in the contents of Scripture than the average American pastor, and to the preaching of some of them any one might listen with interest and profit.

IX

PRESENT ATTAINMENTS IN CHURCH ORGANIZATION, DISCIPLINE AND EFFECTIVENESS.

FROM the beginning, the Karen churches have been independent and from a very early period the great majority of them have been self-supporting. The missionary is sometimes described as being a bishop, but, while, if he has the confidence of his people, he may have more real power than mere ecclesiastical authority can possibly confer, yet this power is always due to his personality rather than to his position. He has absolutely no authority to impose his will upon even the feeblest and most insignificant of God's children. At the present time there are connected with all the Karen missions about nine hundred churches with approximately fifty-five thousand communicants. The missions are twelve in number. By a mission is meant a circle of churches under the supervision of a single missionary. Usually these churches lie within a distinct region of territory with fairly well defined boundaries, called the

field of the particular missionary, but there is some overlapping of fields. Of the churches, about seven hundred have pastors, all of whom are Karens. Most of the pastors have had from one to four years of training in the Karen Theological Seminary in Insein. About two hundred of them have been ordained and are competent to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These pastors often consult the missionary, and here is really the missionary's opportunity. If he is wise, he can impress his opinions upon his people, and it is highly important that he should do his best to hold them up to high standards. The besetting sins of the Karen people at the present time are drunkenness and immorality. The lapse from the high state of morality which existed among them at the first is due to their contact with other races which had no such ideals. On this account discipline has to be more strictly administered in this regard than would otherwise be necessary. But when the missionary has given his opinion, his power ends; he can do no more. It remains for the native church to put his suggestions into force or not, as they think fit. This may seem, at first thought, an unsafe course to pursue but the idea is that the churches have the Holy Spirit as well as the missionary, and it is even better than the church should make a mistake than that the missionary should force his will upon it. And it should be said to the honor of the churches that, in general,

their administration of affairs is most creditable. Whenever a member has done anything unworthy of his Christian profession, whatever his standing or social position may be, as soon as it comes to the knowledge of the church, he is subjected to discipline. If the offense is of a minor character, he is reproved or perhaps suspended for a time from membership, and exhorted to repent and mend his ways. If it is some outbreaking sin, he is at once excluded from fellowship. All this is done in a spirit of Christian love; and if the offender repents of his sin, and makes confession, and shows the fruits of repentance in his life, he is restored to the fellowship of the church, and, as lovingly as before, the offense for which he was disciplined is often scarcely mentioned to him again. All this is done, as has been said, by the local church without any reference whatever to the missionary, and most missionaries are glad to have it so.

But even if the missionary were disposed to interfere in the internal affairs of the churches, he is precluded from doing so by the fact that the churches in most of the missions are not only entirely independent and self-supporting, but they support all their schools and other enterprises besides. In fact the churches of each mission are organized into an association, or, it may be, into two associations of churches which meet once a year, through their representatives, for a comparison of their work and for mutual help and

SCHOOL BOYS DRILLING, TOUNGOO, BURMA

FOUR LITTLE KARENS, TOUNGOO, BURMA

comfort, and the statistical tables which these associations publish are quite formidable. They show contributions on the part of the churches for the support of their pastors, for the support of the station or town school, for the support of the village schools, for ministerial education, for home missions, for foreign missions, and in fact for all the varied functions which are required for orderly church organization and activity. These associational gatherings have their own chairman chosen by the people themselves, their secretaries, their committees, their treasurers, the last named usually handling all the funds of the association, under its direction. The chairman presides with dignity, and often with efficiency. All questions pertaining to the general work of the churches are decided by vote of the assembly. More liberty in talking back and forth is usually allowed than would be permissible under strict parliamentary rules, but the people generally discuss matters until they know what they want and vote accordingly. The secretaries keep a record of the meetings, collect letters and reports from the churches, and tabulate them. The committees manage and direct all the general work of the churches. They appoint the evangelists who engage in home mission work, designate them, supervise them, and regulate their salaries. A committee or board is also usually appointed to have charge of the town school. This committee may appoint or discharge teachers, gather the funds

for the running expenses of the school, decide on questions of discipline, and determine general questions of policy.

It has been said that the churches are self-supporting. By this is not meant that they support their pastors in every case as churches in America do, but simply that they are not dependent upon mission funds from America. So far from the church supporting the pastor, it often happens that the pastor supports himself or may even support the church. This custom has come down from the early beginning of the work. At that time, the leading man in each church was appointed its pastor. Most of the men who were thus chosen had their own means of support, and needed no help from their churches. Furthermore, many of them were men of foresight and initiative, and when they saw the advantages of being under British government, they took up land or started enterprises which were later of value to their people. Such being the precedent established, the successors of those early pioneer pastors have had, for the most part, to find their own means of support. This has not been as great a hardship, however, as might at first appear, for few of them are men of sufficient training to be capable of spending all their time in the preparation of sermons and the other work of the church. When, however, a pastor or any other Christian worker has that capacity, he is usually given a fair living; and in general, with

changed conditions an increasing number of churches are supporting their pastors in full.

The schools are the especial care of the churches. Government does not provide a public school system such as is found in America, any more than it is provided in England. The English idea is that any one should have only such an education as he can pay for. But the desire of the Karen churches in general is that every one who wants an education shall have it. Two main systems of schools are recognized by the government, the vernacular, under native inspectors, in which all subjects are taught in the vernacular only, and the Anglo-Vernacular, under European inspectors, in which English is taught in addition to other reglar subjects. There are vernacular schools in nearly every village that can possibly support one, and there are central or main Anglo-Vernacular schools, usually at the station, in charge of the missionary. The latter are maintained not simply because the people have a craving to learn the English language, but because the grade of work done in such schools under government supervision is of a higher order than in the vernacular schools. In all the village schools, numbering about seven hundred with an enrollment of over eighteen thousand, the tuition is absolutely free, and in most of the station schools it was free until a few years ago, when the government required a small tuition fee to be levied. Even now, it is as small as possible,

and in most schools free board is supplied by the contributions of the churches, so that it is really cheaper for a youth to attend school than not. Most of the sixteen station schools, with their nearly two thousand five hundred pupils, are middle or secondary schools, but there are two high schools with approximately two hundred pupils. From all of these schools pupils are constantly passing to the various departments of the college at Rangoon, or, for religious instruction, to the Theological Seminary at Insein or the Karen Woman's Bible Training School at Ahlone. The proportion of girls to boys receiving instruction in the primary schools is about four to five, in the secondary schools about one to two, and in the high schools, about one to six.

The Theological Seminary is worthy of special mention. It has a corps of two American and four native teachers, a four years' course, and for many years it has had an enrollment of about one hundred and twenty to one hundred and twenty-five students. Many of the students return to serve the churches of their own fields, but some go to distant parts as missionaries of the gospel to other tribes. A Greek department is being developed for the benefit of men of exceptional attainments. Needless to say, the influence of this school has extended for and wide. The financial support of the institution is borne jointly by the churches and the Society in America.

PICKING MANGOES. KAREN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN THE DISTANCE

As has already been stated, all of these various enterprises, with the partial exception just mentioned, are carried on by the churches absolutely at their own expense. In a few of the missions, small grants from the Society at home are still being received for the support of the station school, but even these are almost negligible and are rapidly being dropped altogether. The contributions of the churches for all objects during the last year for which statistics are available amounted to $107,122. For purposes of comparison with the giving of churches in America it should be borne in mind that the usual daily wage for unskilled labor in Burma is about half of a Rupee or one-sixth of a dollar. Every dollar contributed, therefore, corresponds to six days' wages which in America would amount to from $12 to $15.

Many instances might be related of the liberality of the Karen Christians. Recently in Bassein, a school dormitory was to be erected. About Rs. 20,000, nearly $7,000, had to be raised among the Christian Karens to meet the expense, the remainder being met by the government. It was a time of scarcity, for the war made it difficult for the Karen farmers to dispose of their rice. But one man, who had no ready money, borrowed Rs. 1,500 or $500, saying that he frequently had to borrow money for his own work, and why should he not borrow money to provide for the Lord's work? The Shwegyin association was once invited

by one of its smallest churches to hold its next annual meeting with them. Knowing what a great task it is to entertain the meetings where the attendance usually ranges from eight hundred to twelve hundred people and may rise to two thousand, the committees of the association called the representatives of the little church, and asked them if they understood what they were doing.

"We Karens usually know what we are about," was the quiet response. Then it developed that not the whole church, but one man had invited the association. He was a man of some means, and when he was approached he said:

"When I was a heathen, I used to give feasts for my heathen neighbors, and now why should I not give a feast to my Christian brethren? What if it costs the price of an elephant? I will supply the money, furnish the eatables, and provide the entertainment in full. Give me this pleasure before I die." When they heard his remarks, the committee could remonstrate no further and appointed the next meeting at the old man's village. Such illustrations of the devotedness of the Karen disciples to their Lord and his work might be given without number.

It is of interest to note that the very same laws which experience has proved to be regnant in the lives of the churches in America operate among the Karen churches of Burma. Especially is this true with reference to the value to the churches of

home and foreign mission work; and again and again it has been demonstrated that the latter, as well as the former, is indispensable to the best prosperity of God's spiritual heritage. For the foreign mission enterprise has in it the elements of extension; it is like a jointed fishpole. Christians in America send out their missionaries to foreign lands but that is not the end; it is merely one section of the rod. When churches are formed there, they in turn send missionaries to still other regions, and so on. Thus it has been from the beginning, and thus it will be forevermore until the Lord himself returns.

A veteran pastor in America used to tell how, at one time, when his church was heavily burdened with debt, he preached a sermon on foreign missions, and so fervently urged his people to give to that cause that his deacons came to him after the sermon and remonstrated with him, saying:

"Don't you know, pastor, that we cannot afford to have our people give largely for foreign missions, because we have this heavy debt on us, and we must use all our powers to raise that?" The pastor said nothing, but a few Sundays later he preached from the text, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." And as he presented the needs of the home church, his words were accompanied with

such power that his people gave as they had never given before, and when afterwards, the sum of their giving was counted up, it was found that, behold, the heavy debt which had so long burdened them had vanished away. The pastor always attributed the success of that endeavor to the previous preaching of the foreign mission sermon and the opening of his people's hearts to the world-wide work.

The writer once had his attention forcibly called by a minister of another denomination to the history of the Baptists in America, as showing in a rather remarkable manner the healthy reactionary effect of the foreign mission enterprise not only upon an individual church, but also upon an entire denomination. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Baptists of the United States numbered about seventy thousand, a poor, scattered, feeble folk, with little of common interest or cohesion. Shortly after that, they divided about equally on the subject of missions, half of them becoming mission Baptists and the other half anti-mission Baptists. It was at the time when Dr. Adoniram Judson sent back his thrilling appeals from Burma for help. The mission Baptists heard the call and responded. The anti-mission Baptists, on the other hand, said:

"Why should we send missionaries to foreign lands, we have not enough pastors to meet our own needs. No; if God wants to convert the heathen,

he can do it without any of our aid." What has been the result? The writer sometimes recounts this history to his own people in the Shwegyin mission and he is accustomed to say to them:

"You expect your strength to be increased, not when you take rice and put it into other people's mouths' but when you put it into your own mouth. And so one might naturally think that the anti-mission Baptists would have increased in strength, and the mission Baptists have diminished. But that is not the law of the spiritual kingdom which is, 'Give and gain.'" So the mission Baptists of America, instead of diminishing, have increased, not two-fold or three-fold, but ten-fold, a hundred-fold, nearly two hundred-fold, until the scattered thirty-five thousand have become a mighty host, almost seven million strong; and from being the tail they have become well-nigh the head, standing among the first in their educational endowments, in the effectiveness of their denominational enterprises, and in their equipment for every good work. The anti-mission Baptists, on the contrary, in addition to being a "by-word and a hissing," have steadily diminished until now they are scarcely to be found at all. Some may adopt the practice, but few will admit the doctrine.

So as the Karen churches of Burma have given they have gained, as they have scattered they have found increase, and as they have sent their missionaries afar to minister to the destitute their

own resources have developed. The Karens of the Bassein mission have their representatives in distant parts of northern Burma, and the Rangoon Karens have theirs in far-off Siam, and these have always been the very life of the churches.

The writer may, perhaps, be pardoned for referring specifically, by way of illustration, to the history of his own station at Shwegyin. Not long after he went out to the field in 1893, he heard one of the oldest and most experienced of his brethren speak of the importance to the native churches of carrying on the work of the gospel outside of their own boundaries. This reminded him of the story of the movement in America which has been outlined above, and he resolved that as soon as possible he would bring to the attention of his own people some field which they might adopt. After consultation, the Salween District, with its headquarters at Papun, a territory adjacent to the Shwegyin field, to be sure, but entirely outside the circle of the churches, was chosen. They took up the enterprise with great eagerness, and from that time on, the activities of the churches fairly leaped forward. The zeal for the outside work seemed to impart itself to their home work, so that at the same time that they took up the former, they opened two important out-stations, Nyaunglebin and Kyaukkyi, on their own field, points which seemed to be necessary to be occupied for the best prosecution of the general work. In 1893, the

contributions of the churches for all objects had amounted to about five thousand Rupees; they rose gradually until, in 1898, they reached seven thousand five hundred Rupees. That was the year in which this home and foreign mission extension movement was inaugurated. The next year, they rose to over ten thousand Rupees, the year after that to over fourteen thousand Rupees, and the year following to over twenty thousand Rupees, nearly a three-fold increase in three years' time. The next year, they fell off to something over sixteen thousand Rupees, but they have not been less than twenty-five thousand Rupees any year since. Meanwhile, the annual additions to the churches by baptism rose from about one hundred to one hundred and seventy-five or two hundred; and, apparently because of the new spirit which came upon the people, the number of young men who consecrated themselves to the work of the gospel ministry and went to the theological seminary at Insein, for the purpose of preparing themselves for that work, rose from three or four in 1893 to between fifteen and twenty from 1906 on. At the same time, schools were built up at the out-stations which, in addition to the school at Shwegyin, with its enrollment of from one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five, had enrollments running up to two hundred, or even to two hundred and fifty. Many of the pupils were from heathen villages and thus the schools became evangelizing agencies reaching

out into the outlying regions in a way which, so far as one can judge, would not otherwise have been possible.

In fact one is reminded of the story which is told of a certain sportsman. Up in the hills of the Shwegyin District, there was a "rogue" elephant for the destruction of which the government had offered a reward of money in addition to the tusks. This sportsman went up with his elephant rifle to hunt the animal. He found it. He fired one shot, and the great beast fell, apparently dead; but to make sure the sportsman fired again. The elephant moved slightly. The sportsman fired a third time. The elephant moved a little more. He fired again and again, each shot seeming to have a revivifying effect until at the sixth shot the elephant got up and ran away. The Karens tell the story with great gusto; how many "rescensions" it has gone through, it is impossible to say. But it is certain that the more hot shot of foreign missions is poured into the churches of God, anywhere and in whatever conditions, the livelier they become. Best of all, the effort to carry the gospel to those who have it not, together with the self-sacrifice which this always involves, is, of itself, a religious experience of inestimable value to the people of God.

In this connection may be mentioned an incident which, to the missionary, was very affecting. The evangelist at Papun had died suddenly, and the

Karen churches, assembled in annual session, were facing the question of who should take his place. The missionary felt that his successor ought to be some man of ability and character who could be trusted to take hold of the work and carry it forward with zeal and discretion; but he could think of no one available for the important post. Much to his surprise, the leaders among the Karens said it must be the ordained pastor of one of the best churches, a man of whom the missionary had never once dared to think. He seemed indispensable to his own church; he was one of the most beloved of the native pastors, and the missionary had no thought that it would be considered possible to dispense with his services on the home field. When, however, his name was suggested by the Karens themselves, of course the missionary could raise no objection. It was not without a struggle that the appointment was made, for as soon as his name was mentioned, members of his church who were present rose and objected, some of them angrily.

"Why should you choose our pastor?" they said. "The members of our church are for the most part widows and orphans. Our pastor is like a father to us. We cannot spare him. Choose some one else. There are many others." After they had talked a while, the missionary rose and said:

"I do not wonder that the members of the brother's church feel this way, for we all love

him, and it is indeed as they say—many of the members of their church are widows and orphans. But now before we talk any more about this matter, let us go to God with it." Earnest prayer was offered, and after the prayer it was heart-moving to see these same men who had so angrily demurred a few minutes before, rise and say, that if this was of the Lord, they dared not oppose it. A committee was appointed to visit the church, and give it what comfort and consolation and what strengthening of purpose in the Lord it was able, and the much loved pastor was sent forth to do good and acceptable work.

X

PRESENT ATTAINMENTS IN TEMPORAL BETTERMENT

TOO much should not be expected of the Karen disciples in the direction of temporal betterment. The process is slower than that of evangelization and almost painfully tedious. Economy is the basis of true civilization, but it takes a long while for many people to perceive the fact. It is evident, however, in all departments of life. Occidentals use chairs because, if they sat on the floor their clothing, which cannot be readily washed, would soon get soiled, and ruined. If they wore sandals instead of shoes, and could keep their floors scrupulously clean, or if they wore cheap, washable goods as do the East Indians, the case would be different. Men wear collars and cuffs to keep their coats from being damaged. The linen can be laundried, but the material of which coats are made cannot be. No new invention is practicable until it can be made economical. Americans are generally considered extravagant and wasteful. Undoubtedly some are so; and with the vast undeveloped resources of the country, there is not on the part of most of them that carefulness in the use of materials which will doubtless become a necessity as the country grows

more thickly populated and produce relatively scarcer. But that Americans have the economic sense, is evidenced by the fact that they use more telephones and typewriters and employ more stenographers than any other people on the face of the earth. These are economizers of time, and time is economically valuable. The New England housekeeper who, in these days when matches are so cheap, still rolls firelighters is not practicing real economy, unless owing to special circumstances, her time is of no account. Even when rolled, it is cheaper for most people to use matches. In Chicago, on a five cent fare, one may travel forty miles and cover the distance in a couple of hours. In the native Burmese cart as many days would be required to cover the same distance and the expense would be thirty times as great. Labor in the East is commonly supposed to be cheap. Aside from a few minor employments, it is cheap only in wage; in measure of achievement in the large, it is expensive, for there, time-saving devices are wanting. Of course in all civilization the element of taste comes in, adding beauty and attractiveness to what would otherwise be bald and ugly, but the basis is still economy.

Barbarism is always wasteful. Uncultivated land will not support as much life as cultivated land. Two acres of pasture are considered sufficient for the keep of a cow; the amount of tilled land required for the same purpose is much less.

From the accounts of some travelers, one might suppose that in India and Burma a tiger lurks under nearly every bush, but calculation shows it is a physical impossibility that there should be more than about one to a square mile of jungle land, and probably the proportion is much less than that. Supposing a tiger to need for its sustenance one deer a week—which seems not excessive considering that it will seldom eat the entire carcase—it appears that, even if jungle land were as productive as pasture land, a tiger which carefully conserved its resources and allowed the hinds to breed and keep up the stock would need a range of at least one hundred and four acres. But jungle land is not more than from a fifth to a tenth as productive as pasture land, and it is probable that in most parts of Burma and India a tiger must have a range of from five to ten square miles. If it frequents the fringes of human cultivation where it can get an occasional cow or calf, it may not require quite so large a range, but its hold upon such preserves would be very precarious, for, even without shot guns and rifles, the natives have ways of disposing of maurauders of that kind. With a large bamboo laid in a horizontal position and bent to its utmost tension by the strength of several men, they will set a trap, sprung by a fine thread or fiber of tree bark, which will drive a spear straight through a tiger.

But the Karen does not perceive the meaning

of all this. He observes that civilized people have a great many things, and he naturally infers that civilization consists in having many things instead of consisting, as it really does in knowing how to use the things one has. So far as introducing the mere externals of western civilization is concerned, merchants and traders are doing a part quite as important as that of the missionary. As a result the people are becoming more industrious than formerly. The desire to possess this and that—the fabrics imported from England, sewing machines, and, recently, music boxes and victrolas—all this, combined with the fact that under British rule the country has been rapidly brought under cultivation and so withdrawn from general use, has wrought a great change. The writer well remembers, when he was a lad of eight or nine, going with his father to see Burmese sawyers about getting out timber. At that time there were no steam sawmills, and every piece of timber for the house had to be sawed out by hand. Sawpits were dug, the logs rolled into position, and one man above and one below would work the saw up and down. The pay was good for the time, but then the wants of the people were few, and conditions of life easy. It was possible to go out almost anywhere, take up a piece of land, cultivate it and raise a crop of rice; consequently it was most difficult to get the workmen to do anything. Now-a-days the situation is much different. Sawmills have for

the most part taken the place of the old sawpit, but when, occasionally, one must still resort to the latter, there is no difficulty in getting the men to do the work and to do it in good time. The people of today are much more industrious than were the people of fifty years ago both because the conditions of life are more difficult and because the standard of living is higher. This is probably true throughout the Orient, and the slur upon the oriental that he is lazy is becoming less and less applicable.

The mere getting of things, however, the lust for possessing modern conveniences and equipments, the adoption of western civilization out of hand, by the native of Burma or India, is far from desirable, inasmuch as it is not adapted to their surroundings. The conditions of living among the people there have grown up in large part as a result of their environment, and in order to have a right understanding of the problem of civilizing them one must be well-versed in these conditions. Perhaps the manner of life of the Karens cannot be better illustrated than by the story which is sometimes told of Naw Thoo and Naw Wah. Naw Wah, which means Miss White, was a little Christian girl who had lived for several years with a missionary lady; Naw Thoo, meaning Miss Black, was a heathen child who had always lived out in the jungle. One day the latter came to the city and met Naw Wah. Naw Wah asked

her if she would like to see the missionary's house, and she said she would. She had never been in such a house before. It was not a very grand house, for it was more like a barn than anything else one sees in America, as no lathing and plastering were used—there was only the single thickness of boarding on the outside, and all the timbers of the house showed out in the room. Houses there must be made very open, and the walls thin so as to cool off rapidly at night. But, unlike American barns, the house was built up on posts, like stilts, from eight to ten or twelve feet above the ground. This is the general practice in Burma, partly because of the dampness of the ground during the rainy season, and partly because it is a custom handed down from the time when the country was much more sparsely settled than now and tigers might come prowling about. In spite of this precaution, snakes still get into the houses as well as centipedes, scorpions, lizards and other minor pests. Naw Thoo's house in which she lived when at home was built entirely of bamboo. The country produces a great variety of bamboos of different sizes. The builder digs a hole in the ground, and sets up in it a large bamboo, perhaps five or six inches in diameter, for the post of the house. Then he takes a kind of knife—his only tool—with a heavy blade about a foot and a half in length, and cuts a hole in each side of the bamboo. This makes a mortise in which may be placed a smaller

IDOL HOUSE, THARAWADDY, BURMA

KAREN HOUSES

bamboo that answers for a joist. Strips of the same material about an inch wide, lashed down to the joists half an inch apart by means of a kind of rope made from the bark of a tree, provide the floor. By taking a large bamboo, splitting down one side, opening it out and knocking out the knots, a kind of boarding is made for the sides of the building. Again bamboos of the same size are split in two, and, after the knots are cut out, are used for the roof, alternate pieces having the outer curve up and the intermediate pieces having the curve down.

Naw Thoo saw the lady's house made of timber, and wondered at it. She was shown into the sitting room, and was puzzled to know what the chairs were for. Nah Wah actually had to sit down in one to show her, for when she was at home she always sat on the floor. She had never seen a table before, since in her house a table would have been of no use. What could a person sitting on the floor do with a table? She was shown the dining room, with the table linen, the dishes, the knives and forks and spoons arranged on the dining table. She had never seen anything of the kind before. At home she sat on the floor to eat. A large tray of wood, painted red, would be set down, cooked rice would be placed in the sides of the tray around, and in the center would be put a bowl of dressing to go with the rice. This consisted of rotten fish, that is, fish deliberated rotted

for the purpose. The members of the family would sit down on the floor about the tray, one of them would dip out some of the dressing and put it on the rice in front of him, return the spoon to its place in the bowl, mix the fish and rice with his fingers, make the whole into a ball, and put it into his mouth.

Then Naw Thoo was shown the lady's sleeping room with the bed, the mattress, the coverings and the pillow. All these were quite new to her, for when she was at home she slept on the floor, and if she wanted a pillow, she would take a stick of wood or a large bamboo and rest her neck upon it, letting her head hang over on the other side. Suddenly, as she was looking about, Naw Thoo gave a terrible shriek, and rushed out of the house as if she had been shot out of a gun. Nah Wah did not know what to make of it, but after a time managed to catch up with her and ask her what was the matter.

"Why," said Naw Thoo, "the lady keeps the devil in her house."

"Oh, no, she doesn't," replied Naw Wah, "I have lived there a long time and I know she doesn't."

"But I have seen him with my own eyes," said Naw Thoo. Finally, with much persuasion, Naw Wah managed to get Naw Thoo to go back to the house and show her where she had seen the devil. She stole up the steps, through the sitting room

to the door of the bedroom, and pointed, saying:

"There, th—th—there is where the lady keeps the devil." She indicated the mirror hanging on the wall. She had seen herself in it and thought it surely must be the devil. This is not much to be wondered at, for she seldom washed her face, still more seldom combed her hair, and she probably never washed her clothes, for the heathen Karens have a saying that, if you wash your clothes, a tiger will eat you. They do not want the tigers to eat them, so they do not wash their clothes from the time they are made until they fairly rot off their backs. Naw Thoo had been with Naw Wah who kept herself so nice and sleek and clean, and she had forgotten about herself, so that when she saw herself in the mirror, she thought it must surely be the devil.

The writer has frequently told this story to Sunday School children in America, because it gives, in brief compass, an idea of the manner of life of the Karen people. He usually closes by asking what they come to Sunday School for, and says: "We come to study the bible, and learn about God and about Jesus. That is all very good, but there is one thing more we need to learn, without which all the rest is of no use. We need to learn about ourselves, for the bible is a mirror in which we may see ourselves as God sees us, and if we see ourselves as God sees us, we shall feel not unlike Naw Thoo—as if we had seen the evil one

himself. But when Naw Thoo learned that she had really seen herself, and not the devil at all, she wanted to wash up so that she might be like Nah Wah. And if we look into our own hearts and see ourselves as God sees us, we shall want to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses from all sin."

The writer has related the story here as he has often told it to Sunday School children in America, and of course it contains some elements which are not important to the subject in hand; but from this description it may perhaps seem that it ought to be the easiest thing in the world to improve the conditions of these people, yet it is in reality no light matter. On the plains, where the places of abode are fairly accessible to modern workmen, houses of timber are gradually being introduced, but over a large part of the country bamboos furnish the only material which is available for the construction of houses. Indeed, Karens find bamboos useful in such a variety of ways that they wonder how white people get on without them. Bamboos grow everywhere. They are light and exceedingly strong. Properly shored up with bamboo struts, a bamboo house up in the mountains will stand the wildest kind of storm. It lasts only two or three years, but from the hygienic standpoint this is an advantage, since it gives the people a new house to live in.

Any one would say at once that the eating of

rotten fish ought to be done away with; but even that is not so simple a matter. Fish constitute one of the chief products of the country. Burma has two seasons only, a rainy and a dry. For six months there is no rain, and the ground becomes parched and dry. Then for six months there is rain, and the rivers rise and flood their banks and extend like great lakes on every side. The rainfall varies from eighty or ninety inches to a hundred and twenty inches in the vicinity of Rangoon, and from two hundred to two hundred and fifty inches in Maulmein, and there is an even higher rainfall in other places. When the writer is at Nyaunglebin, one of his stations, during the dry season, he is six miles from any running water, but during the rainy season, he can fish out of his window. For during the rainy season the fish go up the streams and cover all the land. This is probably the breeding season for many varieties of fish; but there comes a time when instinct tells them they must return to the lower waters, and they begin to make their way down stream. Then men put weirs across the streams and catch them in great quantities. Those which are detained in little lakes and shallows, here and there, are caught by means of nets. Thus at this season fish are very abundant. They are dressed a little, and placed on platforms in the sun where they are allowed to swell up to about twice their original size. Then they are taken

and put down in large earthen vats in layers, with salt between the layers, making a sort of pickle, and are allowed to remain for from three to six months. At the end of that time, bones and fins have become so dissolved that they are one indistinguishable mass; of course the odor is reeking. But in this condition the fish will keep for a considerable period. It will spoil in time, although how it becomes more spoiled than it already is, according to western ideas, it is hard to imagine. Undoubtedly some chemical change takes place which renders it unfit for food. To western people, the very thought of eating this preparation is nauseating; but the Karens learn to eat it with relish, and when anything is said about it, ask if white people do not eat rank-smelling cheese. It is difficult to see how in that tropical climate this great supply of fish could be made available for the mass of the people the year around, unless it were prepared in some such way.

Of course in the matter of cleanliness, betterment is comparatively easy. Certainly clothes need not be left unwashed until they rot off the back; and yet when one considers the conditions in which the people live, and must live, it is not difficult to make allowance for a considerable degree of uncleanliness. During the dry season upon the plains, the ground is baked hard, and when it is beaten up by the heavy cartwheels, it becomes a fine dust which fills the air and sifts into the houses every-

where, for the heat of the climate makes it impossible to close the houses. They must have ample openings for ventilation. During the rainy season, on the other hand, whenever the people step out of doors, they may have to go in mud up to the ankle, and between the mud of the rainy season and the dust of the dry, it is difficult to keep nicely clean. Moreover, in the bamboo houses, at all seasons of the year, there is a small insect, much like the weavil, which gradually eats up the fibre of the bamboo and scatters a fine dust through all the house.

The chewing of betel nut is another matter in which it is difficult to bring about a rapid change, although it is one of the most disgusting of habits. The betel nut itself is the fruit of a kind of palm, of surpassing beauty. The fruit grows in clusters at the top. The nut has an astringent or puckery taste, and it is said will tan leather; nevertheless, if used alone, it would probably be innocent enough. With it is combined the leaf of a vine which the people cultivate. This leaf is about as large as that of the beach and of similar shape, but is thicker and has a slightly spicy taste. The user of the betel nut takes one of these leaves on the palm of his hand, smears moist lime over it, on the lime places the betel nut which he has previously sliced up into small pieces, rolls the whole up into a quid and chews it. The lime seems to be required to make it palatable. The flow of saliva

is profuse, and the custom is even more filthy than the chewing of tobacco. The expectoration is red in color, and care is required to prevent its overflowing from the mouth and discoloring the chin. The teeth soon turn black, and ultimately drop out.

The writer once made a long tour into Northern Siam to visit some Karen churches which were gathered there many years ago. On the way he passed through Chiengmai, one of the principal stations of the American Presbyterian Mission, and formed the acquaintance of a medical missionary there. The doctor had been asked by a Siamese prince to come and extract a tooth for him, and was so kind as to invite the writer to go along. The two went together to the palace and were ushered into the prince's presence. The prince pointed out to the doctor the obstreperous tooth which he wished to have drawn, and asked him if it would hurt any. The doctor examined the tooth and said he thought not. The prince, however, was not satisfied, and, as there was a prince of lower rank present, asked the doctor to extract a tooth for that man first, with the understanding that if it did not hurt him, he himself would submit to the operation. The doctor examined the second prince's mouth until he found a tooth which was about in the same condition as that of the first prince, and drew it. The second prince's face was still placid, showing no evidence of pain. The first prince asked if it hurt any, and he said:

"No, it did not."

"Well, then," said the first prince, "I am ready to have my tooth drawn." The doctor said afterwards that the tooth was barely hanging by the skin, that the lime with the betel nut which the prince was accustomed to chew had undoubtedly dissolved away the bony process which holds the tooth in place, so there was nothing to which it could cling.

Users of betel nut often suffer greatly from various forms of dyspepsia, some of them being most painful and distressing. But the habit is almost universal and its hold is very strong, so that it is difficult for those who once become addicted to it to give it up. Old men who have lost their teeth have little brass mortars with sharp-edged pestles with which they manage to crunch up the mass, then put it in their mouths and mumble it with their gums. Some say that unless they have their betel nut, their food does not taste good, and probably it becomes in time almost indispensable, as some people claim that they cannot get on without their tobacco. There seems little doubt that the prevalence of the habit is due in part to the insipidity and sameness of most of the native food.

The living conditions of the common people in Burma are not, then, so easy to be improved as one might think. The problem is a difficult one, and a long time must intervene before a really worth-while indigenous civilization can be devel-

oped. But even though the outward forms of civilization may be wanting, Christianity undoubtedly implants in the hearts of its followers the seeds of a genuine culture which will ultimately find ways of expression. As has already been pointed out, when a Karen is converted, he wants first of all to get an education, and then he wants to improve his physical surroundings. Reference has been made to the zeal and devotion of many of the early pastors and their sagacity in seizing the opportunities which opened out before them upon the British occupation of the country. Some of these men took up extensive tracts of land, rallied their people about them, and had them bring the land under cultivation, thus establishing many flourishing settlements in place of the shifting abodes to which the Karens had formerly been accustomed. Some of them dug extensive systems of irrigating ditches, for the cultivation of special crops on land which was unsuitable for other purposes, and thus laid the basis for later prosperity, enriching not only themselves but also their people. One still marvels at what was accomplished by many of these men. Karens have told the writer that when his father first went among them, few owned so much as a buffalo, and when they needed a cart, the householders in a whole village would have to club together to buy one. Now herds of buffaloes are seen grazing about their villages, there is a cart under every house, and a few of the

people have incomes which would enable even a white man to live in comfort—all very largely the result of native foresight and initiative.

In some parts Karens live in a kind of community house, but when they become Christians, they want, for the sake of privacy, to live in separate houses. Christian villages are cleaner than heathen villages; on this account they often escape epidemics of cholera and other diseases to which their heathen neighbors are subject. More and more the disciples are coming to feel that the chewing of betel nut is not befitting to them as Christians, and are not only discarding its use but ceasing its cultivation, although some of them have their living by it, and, like the raising of tobacco in America, it brings them a larger return than would anything else. Improved styles of clothing are being adopted, dwelling houses made more attractive; and a greater variety in food, as well as a more wholesome diet, is being sought.

Meanwhile progress has been made in other directions. Karens have risen to positions of distinction and honor; some are forest officers, inspectors of schools, commanders of military police and judges of courts. A few have become barristers, some doctors, while many are teachers. A Karen has recently been appointed a member of the Lieutenant Governor's council, the highest honor within the power of the local government to confer on a native of the country. Some of them read

Shakespeare understandingly. One has translated The Merchant of Venice into the Karen language. Many are fine singers. At the world's Y. P. S. C. E. Convention in Agra, the Karen choir commanded universal praise. In fact the Christian Karens in general have developed a remarkable gift of song. The native music is by no means so pretentious as is that of the Burmans. The latter with their trills and runs, might almost rival the operatic singer of the west, but their voices are utterly lacking in musical quality. The tone is a shriek or a yell, formed in an entirely different manner from our singing tone. The native singing of the Karens, on the other hand, ordinarily covers a range of only a few notes but, while the quality is not very good, at least it is not raucous. A few native airs are still sung by the Christians, suitable hymns having been composed to go with them. They are weird and of pleasing melody. For the rest, the Christian Karens, unlike the Indian Christians who have largely retained their own airs, have adopted western tunes. In the average congregation, even in far-off jungle villages, every one will be singing; and the Karen Christian may not have a bible, but he is almost sure to have a hymn book. This wondrous gift of song goes far to compensate for other deficiencies, especially when it is remembered that among these people is to be found an ever increasing number of those who are fine and companionable in every way, fitted to grace any circle.

XI

THE CONSERVATION OF THE KAREN RACE AS A BY-PRODUCT

PROBABLY most missionaries to the Karens have supposed that they were a decadent race, or at least that they were losing their language and their distinguishing racial characteristics. It was feared that they were rapidly becoming Burmanized. Many of them speak the Burmese language as fluently as their own, and there are some who use nothing else, having quite forgotten their mother tongue. This tendency has seemed so strong that many have expected the Karen language to disappear entirely in the course of a few generations, if not within a few decades. But on consulting the last government census report of Burma the writer was greatly surprised to learn that these fears are groundless. The figures given in the census prove that, so far from being a decadent race, the Karens are showing signs of marked virility. Not so very long since, they stood fourth among the races of Burma in numerical importance, not only the Burmese, but also the Talaings and Shans taking precedence over them. Now, on the other hand, they stand second, the Talaings

and Shans having been outdistanced. During the ten year period covered by the census, while the population of the province as a whole increased from 10,490,624 to 12,115,217, or fifteen per cent., and the Burmese population from 7,437,363 to 8,317,842 or about twelve per cent., the number of persons actually speaking the different dialects of the Karen language rose from 881,290 to 1,067,363, an advance of over twenty-one per cent. Part of this increase has been due to the inclusion of dialects or tribes which were not formerly comprised in the census area. But a reference to the statistics of the Sgaw and Pwo Karen tribes alone, which were not affected by changes in the census, indicates that they show practically the same rate of increase, the number of those actually speaking these dialects having risen during the period named from 704,835 to 850,756.

But of peculiar interest is the comment of the Superintendent of the Census, Mr. C. Morgan Webb. Referring to the Karens as a whole, he says:

"In the midst of communities who have readily amalgamated with whatever tribes and races happened to be in their immediate vicinity, the Karens alone have remained isolated and self-contained. The ready reception they have given to the teachings of Christianity has tended to strengthen their individuality as a racial group, and to widen the differences existing between them and the remain-

ing indigenous races of the province. While the Talaings, at one time supreme over the whole deltaic portion of Burma, are being absorbed by the Burmese, there is no suggestion that any such absorption, or even that any amalgamation between the Burmese and the Karen races is within the range of possibility."

Here, then, is presented the phenomenon of a race which a hundred years ago, under the heel of oppression, was probably no more than holding its own, if indeed it was not in danger of actual extinction, now steadily advancing in numbers until it has outdistanced all the other races of Burma except the Burmese themselves. And this increase is ascribed by so impartial an observer as the superintendent of the census to the influence of Christianity. The case is even stronger than Mr. Webb puts it. For in another place, writing of the Sgaws and Pwos, the two leading Karen tribes, he says:

"There is a tendency for the Pwo dialect to give place to the Sgaw, but the figures recorded do not enable the strength of this tendency to be measured." One might perhaps infer from this language that the Sgaw is supplanting the Pwo in the sense that those formerly speaking Pwo are now speaking Sgaw. But such is not the fact. Those who are familiar with the situation know full well that the Pwos are not becoming Sgaws; they are rather being Burmanized, and so lost to

the Karen race altogether. The tendency for the Pwos to give place to the Sgaws must therefore mean an absolute increase on the part of the Sgaws over and above the rate of increase of the Karens as a whole. This is the more significant because it is among the Sgaws that Christian missions have been chiefly successful.

For a full appreciation of these statements the racial conditions existing in Burma need to be borne in mind. Burma is situated near the head of those spurs and lesser ranges which, beginning in the eastern part of the Himalayas, extend fan-like, in a south-easterly direction, to the borders of the continent of Asia at Singapore and other points, and crop up beyond in the partly submerged mountain-islands of the Andamans and the East Indian Archipelago. Three of these ranges, the Eastern, Middle and Western Yomas, pass through Burma itself. In the northern part of the country, other ranges cross and intersect in such a way as to divide the face of the land into numerous little valleys. There have been several invasions of Burma by immigrants from China on the north, but these have not been, like the early migrations of barbarian hordes into Europe, when the oncoming hosts surged in like a great flood. The mountain barriers have prevented that. Rather these invasions have been like a mere spill, the dashing of spray, a trickle over the passes of the mountains, at numerous periods and at various in-

tervals. Many of these waters lodged in little valleys here and there, and formed so many separate communities, sometimes only half a dozen small villages constituting a tribe with its own peculiar dialect. It is only those tribes which in some way push on, or are thrust on, to the more open country to the south that can ever become numerically important. No fewer than sixty-five indigenous languages and dialects are named in the government census, and the list is by no means exhaustive. In olden times, these races and tribes were comparatively stable, but recently, with a strong government over the whole country, improved communications and increased trade, nearly all of them are in a state of flux. The tendency is for the smaller tribes to be swallowed up in the larger. The census indicates that of the sixty-five languages and dialects listed, no fewer than seventeen showed a decrease in number, three of these actually becoming extinct. Of the rest, fifteen have increased chiefly because they have only recently been brought into the area covered by the census operations, and eight are so small as to be negligible. A few on the outskirts of the country are being strengthened by immigration from China. There are also the natives of India who come by sea and are for the most part mere transients, earning a small competency and returning to their own country. The Karens alone, although living alongside of the Burmans in the deltaic portions of the coun-

try, where it would seem that they ought most certainly to become amalgamated with the latter, are successfully resisting that tendency and maintaining their independent, separate, racial existence.

Is Mr. Webb correct in ascribing this rather remarkable phenomenon to the ready reception which the Karens have given to the teachings of Christianity, and, if so, in what way has it been brought about? To the former question it may be answered, yes, and no. It should be observed that Mr. Webb does not have in mind the increase of the Karens in numbers. That is undoubtedly due to the protection accorded to them by the British government. Formerly, under the Burmese king, as has been noted, they were subjected to all manner of abuse and oppression. But with the advent of the British all this was changed at once. Since then, the Karens have been protected in their pursuits, have enjoyed perfect liberty to go and come at their pleasure without fear of others, and have experienced such prosperity and ease as they had never known before. To these benign influences the growth of the Karen race in numbers is undoubtedly due. But the Talaings and the Shans and the many other races of Burma have had precisely the same protection as the Karens; they have been under the same laws, and enjoyed the same immunities. There is no reason to suppose that they, as compared with the latter, are lacking in physical stamina. Why, then, do they all tend to

amalgamate, to flow together, while the Karens alone are maintaining their racial independence? It is this which Mr. Webb ascribes to the influence of the missionaries, and he is undoubtedly right, if, with this influence, be included all that made it possible.

Just here the question may very naturally be asked whether this persistent differentiation of the Karen race is desirable. Would it not be better for them to amalgamate with the Burmans and lose their identity? Why maintain separate language and customs? To answer such questions as these is aside from the purpose of the writer here, nevertheless, it may be pointed out that any race which has the virility to assert itself and maintain its integrity in the face of disintegrating influences such as surround the Karens, may be supposed, in the very nature of the case, to be a worth-while race. The presumption is strongly in their favor at the outset. As to the Karens in particular, if something aside from brute force is of value in the world, if virtue, idealism and integrity are real assets and not mere liabilities, it would seem that the conservation of the Karen race, with its language and customs, is not a mistake, but is something to be desired; for with its language and customs would undoubtedly go its comparatively high moral standards and everything else that makes it unique among the peoples of the East.

What, then, have the missionaries done to bring

about this result? And what forces have cooperated with them to make it possible? It should be conceded to start with that, however great the zeal and faithfulness of the missionaries, their efforts would, so far as one can judge, have met with comparatively meager success had it not been for the remarkable preparedness on the part of the Karens themselves for the reception of Christianity. Beyond this, the work of the missionaries has been largely confined to the gathering and training of a Christian community. Little outside of that has been possible. The heathen population, measureably accessible though they have been to the gospel, have not been open to what is known as social service, for instance. Whatever influence has been exercised upon the race as a whole, along these lines, has been achieved through the medium of the Christian community and on the side of the religious approach alone. It is commonly said that Peter Parker opened China at the point of the lancet, but, whatever may have been true of other races, the lancet does not open the way for the acceptance of Christianity among the Karens today, and never has. The process is, in fact, quite the reverse—the Christian religion sometimes opens the way for the lancet, the preacher has introduced the doctor, and only after the doctor has been recognized as a man of God have his medicines been accepted.

A Karen vaccinator, holding a government li-

cense, went to a heathen Karen village to vaccinate the people against an epidemic of small-pox which was raging in the vicinity. But the villagers refused to receive him until a preacher had vouched for him, because, they said, they were afraid he would innoculate them with the real disease, in the manner of some Burmese practitioners. After the preacher had assured them of the man's entire trustworthiness, they consented to be vaccinated. Not a few government doctors of genuine zeal and devotion to their tasks mourn that they have so little access to the Karen people—and yet no such obstacle stands in the way as that of caste in India. The reason they are not able to reach the people more effectively is that they lack the religious approach.

Even if the heathen had been open to the social approach, it is not certain that the missionaries could have done much for them. When they began their work among the Karens, they were as enthusiastic as could be desired for giving them the benefits of western civilization as well as of western religion. Occidentals, especially perhaps those of Anglo-Saxon extraction, are so obsessed with the absolute superiority of their civilization, that they are likely to think the peoples of the East ought to accept it as a matter of course. Such is the benignity of their attitude towards these less favored peoples that, if they do not adopt at once what is offered, there is a disposition to force it

upon them willy-nilly, and any resistance on their part is prone to be ascribed to their intense conservatism, the reflection never once arising that the trouble may lie exclusively in the unsuitability of western methods to oriental conditions and surroundings.

The writer was once talking with a prominent government official when he told of an experience he had had while holding a subordinate office. He got out an American reaping machine and announced that on such a day he would reap the field of a certain village headman. At the appointed time, people came from miles around to witness the unusual event. The machine was turned into the field, and men, women and children gazed in open-eyed astonishment as it reaped in a few hours what it would have taken them days to harvest with their little hand sickles. When that field was reaped, the young officer turned to another headman and proposed to reap his field.

"Oh, no," said the man, "I do not want you to reap my field." This incident was related as an evidence of hopeless conservatism on the part of the second headman, and by inference of the people of Burma in general; but in reality it proves nothing of the kind. It only showed the inadaptability of western methods to eastern conditions. There rice fields are divided up by means of little earthen ridges a foot or two in height into plots averaging not more than half an acre in extent. The writer

is not quite sure of the reason of this, but his understanding is that, if the plots were made larger, the wind would set up currents in them which would interfere with the best growth of the plants. By harvest time, the water has, of course, disappeared, but turn an American reaper into one of these little plots, and more grain would be trodden down than reaped. The old-fashioned cradle might be useful, if made small enough; the natives are so slight of stature that they could hardly swing full-sized cradles. But really there, where labor is so cheap, it is difficult to find methods of agriculture which are an improvement on their own, and the American reaper is as little suited for their needs as the leg of an elephant to the body of a cat.

The oriental is really no more conservative than the occidental. The marvellous changes which have been voluntarily adopted in China and Japan in recent years, really, though perhaps not confessedly, as a result of Christian missions, is convincing evidence. But the westerner, when trying to instruct the inhabitant of the East, is quite as likely to make himself ridiculous as helpful. The missionaries tried introducing American plows. The Karens are agriculturists and it seemed that it ought to be easy enough to find a plow that would be an improvement on the native implement, which is simply a forked stick with an iron shoe on the end of it. But various plows were tried and speedily discarded; not one of them proved to be

really practical. American plows are too heavy for the small native cattle to draw, and in any case a draft of only three or four inches is required, as the rice sprouts cannot stand up well in deeply plowed soil.

Now the time has probably come when the missionary, if set free from other work and given financial backing, which would enable him to do it, might accomplish something along the line of agricultural experimentation which would be really constructive. After three-quarters of a century of intimate contact with the people, he has learned humility and realizes that he would have to begin from the standpoint of eastern conditions, not of western. Problems in plenty present themselves. Many of the Karens, who were originally a hill tribe, came down to the plains when the country was first opened up by the British, and took up land which has since become valuable. With repeated cultivation of the same crop, however, these lands are losing their fertility, while the hills, which are capable of supporting a vast population and are still the natural habitat of the Karens—a region where their sturdy physiques have their best development—remain for the most part uncultivated. The whole great task would not be an easy one. Probably not less than five years of sympathetic study on the spot by a trained expert would be required before even a beginning could be made. The government is already trying to do something;

it has a Director of Agriculture, with two or three assistants who have been trained in English or Canadian schools. But government cannot get into intimate touch with the Karens—missionaries are specialists at that, and recognized as such. There is good reason to believe, however, that in time the problems mentioned would be solved. This might mean much for the betterment and prosperity of the entire Karen race. But, to tell the truth, up to the present, the missionaries have been able to do little along these lines even for the Christian community, let alone the great body of heathens.

Nor is it by any means sure that, even if the missionaries had all along been in a position to render aid to the heathen community, and they had been open to approach, they would have profited by it. Not that which is from without, but that which is from within, defiles the man; and equally true is it that, not that which is imposed from without, but that which is implanted within, benefits the man. There is not the slightest doubt that the Christian converts would seize with avidity any suggestions which they found really practicable. They have the new spirit which would prompt them to it. Many of them are constantly on the lookout for anything which may prove a benefit to their people. But as to the heathen, the case is different. The writer and his father before him have both been asked many times by heathen to

do them some favor. No one was ever refused. At various times substantial benefits have been secured, grants of land, reduced taxation, exemption from onerous impressment, and so forth. The missionaries have always been glad to help, but, so far as is known, none of the recipients of their kindnesses has ever been really profited. Not only have they not been more forward to accept the Christian religion, but they have gotten no real good from what was done for them. They simply had more money to spend for drink, or more leisure for carousing, or something of the sort. It was not in them to turn the favors received to good account, but only to evil.

The temporal progress mentioned in a previous chapter has been confined almost exclusively to the Christian community. So far as the writer knows, not one heathen Karen has ever risen to even a moderate degree of distinction. Some have acquired wealth in one way or another, but not one has attained to even a subordinate position of honor or trust in the service of the government or anywhere else. The government has been thoroughly cordial and would gladly recognize ability wherever found. Other positions are also open. But the heathen Karen simply does not possess the power. He is intellectually as good as dead.

What then is the present situation? The number of Karen Christians, as recorded in the census, is 130,271 less than twelve per cent. of the entire

Karen population. Of course this includes not simply actual members of churches, but the entire Christian constituency, men, women and children, those who are Christians by conviction and life, and those, not very numerous to be sure, who are registered as Christians because they do not care to subscribe themselves as belonging to any other faith. This small community has made remarkable progress along all lines. The same would undoubtedly have been true of the entire Karen nation had it all been christianized, as at one time seemed probable. It develops that, although this did not take place, the entire race has nevertheless been remarkably conserved. If again the question be raised, "How has this result been brought about?" the answer is confessedly difficult. The missionaries seem to have had, and in the nature of the case could have had, little to do with it. Their efforts were of necessity confined to the gathering and building up of the Christian community. Whatever else was accomplished was brought about purely and simply by indirection, and its process is obscure. Was it that the Karens, even though they did not become Christians, could not forget their early traditions? Was it that in the Christian appeal they felt the pull of their old time faith? Even though they may not have heeded it, have they heard the inner call to return to their God, and has this been a bond to hold them as a race from dissolution? In other words, has the

power of God manifested itself directly upon the hearts of these people, rallying them about the ancient ideals which, though crude, were nevertheless in the main true to him?

Doubtless among all peoples wherever a spiritual evangel has been preached, it has brought temporal blessing, the "healing of the nations." In some instances this may have arisen as the result of direct effort, the answer of Christian sympathy to human need, but in the case of the Karens, it has been achieved, so far as can be judged, on the ground of the religious appeal alone. The call of God, whether heeded or unheeded, has been as life from the dead. It has awakened an entire race with the thrill of consciousness. Even though still partially enswathed in the cerements of death, it has heard the word of power and is coming forth to take its rightful place in the world arena. What position it may ultimately occupy, no one can tell. Probably it will never be numerically so important as the dominant races of India or of China, perhaps not even so important as the Burmese. But its moral significance is likely to outweigh by far its greatness in numbers. Meanwhile it is an earnest of the blessed work which God intends to carry on among all races through the gospel of his Son.

XII

IS THERE STILL NEED FOR MISSIONARIES?

THE writer stood one day on the banks of the Salween River which, for a distance of about seventy-five miles, forms the boundary between Burma on the west and Siam on the east. At the point where he stood, the river is only a few hundred yards wide, although it broadens out some miles below into a majestic stream. The channel, which is a rocky gorge, is very deep, how deep he has no means of knowing. Local tradition has it that it is so deep that, if there were no water in it, the traveller on foot would require a whole day to thread his way down one side and up the other. This is doubtless an exaggeration, but beyond question the depth is really very great. The current is terrific, reminding one of the Niagara in the gorge below the falls. It is perhaps like what Niagara would be if its channel were deeper, for in the Salween there is no furious dashing of waves on the surface as in the other river, but a writhing and seething and twisting and turning quite as suggestive of power. The missionary had with him seven ponies, for he was on a tour into

Northern Siam. A whole month would be required for the journey each way. Usually he had but five ponies, two for riding and three for packing, but on this occasion another missionary was going with him, and so he had two more. The problem was to get the ponies across the river. By the bank was a native boat, a dug-out of rather unusual size, hewn out of a single log. It was thirty-five or forty feet in length and about three feet and a half wide. The seven ponies were led into the stream alongside the boat. They were native ponies, the tallest only about twelve hands high, so small that when the missionary stood beside it with elbow at his side and his forearm stretched out horizontally, his hand rested on the top of the animal's shoulder, and when he rode, his feet came within a few inches of the ground. Yet it was sturdy and willing, and would carry his hundred and ninety pounds up and down the roughest roads, paths which no self-respecting American horse would travel alone, to say nothing of carrying a weight on its back.

When the ponies had all been led into the water on the side of the boat downstream, the missionary took his place in about the center of the boat lengthwise, holding his two largest ponies by their bridles; ahead of him were men with two more of his ponies, and back of him were men with the other three. Then a strange thing happened. The boatman, a large stockily built man who had a

reputation all over Burma for his skill, stood on the stern as firmly as a tree growing on a rock, grasped the end of a large, long paddle in his right hand,—the paddle must have been from eight to ten feet in length, with a blade about fifteen inches wide—wrapped his right foot around it down near the blade; and struck off from shore, rowing and steering that great boat, with its dragging freight, alone, with a single motion of the paddle. No sooner did the ponies find their feet off the ground than they became frantic. They were so swept with the current hither and thither that they knew not what to make of it. Sometimes they struck off away from the boat, sometimes in towards the boat as if they would climb in, sometimes forward, sometimes backward, until the craft became quite unmanageable. Meanwhile the ponies with the boat and its occupants were being borne down the river. For half a mile or more they were carried until they reached an enormous eddy which flung its whirling currents almost from bank to bank. The missionary thought that they would all surely be swept back to shore again, but by that time the ponies had become so utterly fatigued with their efforts, that they could struggle no longer. The biggest one, the favorite riding pony, lay over on its side with its stomach in the air quite ready to give up the ghost. Its master had to hold its head above water by main force, else it would have been drowned, then and

there. When the ponies ceased struggling, however, the boat became manageable again, the boatman turned the prow toward the further shore, pushed forward with his mighty paddle, and soon the ponies felt their feet on solid ground again, clambered up the bank, and in a short time were ready for the continuation of the journey.

The incident is mentioned here not because of its exciting nature, although the adventure was sufficiently thrilling at the time,—for the other missionary who watched from the shore thought that they would all be drowned,—but because it gives a picture of conditions as they exist even today on the mission field of Burma. There were the ponies struggling frantically in the water, their friend in the boat trying to encourage them as well as he could with his familiar voice, and the boatman at the stern, ready, active, resourceful. There are the native Christians in the stress of conditions which are at best truly disheartening, there is the missionary doing what he can to encourage and direct them, and ever at the helm, guiding all, is the Master.

No one can conceive the stress and turmoil of the conditions with which the native Christians have constantly to contend. To live from childhood up in a land in which cholera is endemic and one can never tell when it may spring up is, of itself, sufficiently terrifying. A horrible disease it is, shudderingly rapid in its action; for in that country one

may get up in the morning feeling perfectly well, and be in his grave at night. Take a sponge full of water and squeeze it until there is not a drop left—that is cholera. It turns all the fluids of the system into water and drains them off, so that soon the eyes become sunken, the fingers and toes shriveled up because there is nothing to fill out the skin, the wrist pulseless because there is so little blood to pulsate,—perhaps a slight pulse under the armpit,—that is all.

The writer has seen only a few cases of this dread disease. The first was that of a pupil in the station school, about fourteen years of age. He was taken ill one morning, but the missionary did not learn of it until noon. By that time he looked more like a corpse than a living person. The missionary had him segregated from the other pupils, and with the aid of the teachers and older school boys took care of him. Soon he noticed that they were grasping the patient's legs with all their might. He asked why they did so, and was told that he was having cramps, and, if they did not hold the muscles in place, those from the back would whip around to the front. Such excruciating pains as the little fellow suffered it is impossible to describe. He survived until the next morning. While preparations were being made for burying him, which was done at once, another child was noticed to be acting strangely, and was asked what ailed him. He said that he did not

feel well, and at two o'clock that day he was dead. When a case breaks out among the Karens, it is customary for them to leave a goblet of water by the side of the patient, who always suffers from a racking thirst, and make for the jungle, taking with them a few handfuls of rice or whatever else is conveniently to hand. Or, if it is a Christian village, a person will be left to care for the sick one, but that usually means that, when the villagers return, three or four days later, there are two bodies to bury instead of one. For quickly and mysteriously as the disease appears, it subsides as quickly if it finds no human victims. Among the Burmese, on the other hand, with their fatalistic ideas, it is customary for the people to remain in their homes, and great numbers may be swept off in a few days. Until recent years the reports of the British army posts, where the best of physicians are employed, showed only two or three per cent of recoveries from cholera. Now, improved methods of treatment,—among them being the introduction into the system of normal salt solution to take the place of the blood which has been drained off,—may have raised the percentage somewhat, but of course the natives know nothing of these methods. To live from childhood up in such a country, constantly surrounded by a menace of this kind, is like having a continuous nightmare.

There are other diseases. The dreaded small-

pox frequently breaks out. People in that country do not use the precautions familiar with us to prevent the spread of the malady. Some of the more enlightened are beginning to resort to vaccination, but the approved native way is to inoculate with the real disease. Measles is almost as much dreaded as small pox, as it frequently assumes a virulent form. In travelling through the jungles it is not uncommon at the approach to a Karen village to see hung overhead across the pathway a rope from which are suspended fetters of elephants, neck-gongs of the domestic buffalo, yoke-bows of oxen, clubs and cudgels, as a warning to bring no infectious disease into the village on pain of punishment and fines.

But the worst scourge of all, perhaps, although not so spectacular as some, is the malaria. This is almost universal. It is subtle in its action, but its effects are often very serious. Young people sixteen to eighteen years of age, who ought to be in the enjoyment of exuberant youth, will frequently come to the missionary and say,

"Oh, Teacher, I wish I could die; I am so miserable." And as he looks upon their sallow faces, their sunken, almost expressionless eyes, their soft, flabby muscles, he does not wonder at it. Sometimes babies have malaria so badly that before they are six months old their spleens become enlarged, and it is quite common to meet a man whose spleen fills half the abdominal cavity. Most

people in America do not know where the spleen is but every Karen knows.

Mad dogs are another source of terror. Six were killed on the writer's compound in one season—for there are mad dog seasons in Burma, as there are strawberry seasons in America, and they come at about the same time. The Burmese will never kill a mad dog since they think it is a sin to take animal life. The consequence is that the pests roam at large biting people and other dogs, and spreading the virus of their dreadful disease. There is a Pasteur institute in Rangoon to which one may go for treatment, but few of the natives know of it or understand its value. For the most part they content themselves with their own remedies. The native doctors profess to have methods of treatment which first develop in the patient all the symptoms of hydrophobia and then cure him of them. They are, of course, of more than doubtful value, but enough people who have been bitten by mad dogs recover anyway to lend plausibility to the claim.

Venomous serpents abound. There is the cobra or hooded serpent, whose bite is almost invariably fatal. The members of this family of reptiles vary in size from a small yellow variety less than a foot long with a bronze colored head of metallic luster to the hamadryad twelve feet long. This last is as fleet as a horse, and will chase a man. An instance is recorded of a Burman who was being pur-

sued by one of these monsters. He came to a stream of water, and in jumping across it his red turban fell off. The serpent's attention was attracted by that, it attacked it viciously, and the man escaped. The Russell's viper is worse than the cobra. It is a short, thick reptile, only about a foot and a half long, but as large around as the wrist of a man. It likes to lie in the dust of the roadway. Step over it, and nothing happens; but the slightest touch, and its stroke is as quick as lightning and more deadly than that of the cobra. A beautiful young Karen woman, belonging to one of the choicest families in the Shwegyin mission, went down out of her house one night, barefooted according to the custom of her people, and returned saying that she had stepped on a thorn. Soon serious symptoms developed, and in a few hours she was dead. It is supposed that she had stepped on the fang of a dead viper which had been killed there some months before. The body of the snake had decayed away, but the poison sack remained and that was still able to inject the poison into the wound made by the fang. A kind of water snake is described whose bite is said to be even more venomous than that of the viper. Some one will go to the spring to draw water, be bitten by this serpent, and not be able to get back to the house, but drop dead almost instantly.

The python is another denizen of the forest which is greatly to be feared. It is not venomous

like the serpents just mentioned, although the Karens have a tradition to the effect that in the beginning it was the only creature whose bite was venomous, and its poison was so powerful that, if it bit even the footprint of a man, the man would shortly die. But it had seen no evidence of its power; so it inquired of the birds if they knew anything about it. The paddy bird and the owl and the great horned toucan said they knew nothing, but the crow said that it had seen a man whose track the python had bitten, and it had followed him, but it judged that, so far from having an injurious effect on the man, it must have produced a very joyous result, for it had seen a great concourse of people who were engaged in dancing and singing. The fact was that the man had died, and what the crow witnessed was a Karen funeral, but it mistook it for a festal occasion. When the python heard the crow's report, it climbed up into a tree and in sheer disgust spewed out all its venom on the ground. Then the cobras and the vipers and the tigers and the toads came and licked it up. The stinging spine fish had only time to dip its spines in. The consequence is that all these creatures are venomous to this day, but the python is free from venom. It is, nevertheless, a much dreaded foe of man. It may hang suspended from the branch of a tree, seize the unwary traveller, wrap itself around him, and squeeze him to death before assistance can come. Tigers, leopards,

bears and other wild animals also roam the jungle to the terror of the native peoples.

From some of the worst of these dangers the missionary is comparatively safe. During a cholera epidemic he is careful to drink boiled water only, and eat no uncooked vegetables, or fruit which has not been disinfected. He never sleeps without having a mosquito netting over him, so is measureably free from malaria. If he is bitten by a mad dog, he goes to a Pasteur institute for treatment. Some of the natives know of these preventives, but few realize their importance, and to change the habits of an entire race is not easy.

Of course none of these things is new to the student of missions. Every one who is at all familiar with conditions in the tropics must know of them. They are mentioned here because, while usually considered from the side of the missionary, or perhaps merely mentioned as matters of curious interest, they have a real and vital relation—in fact their most intimate relation—to the people native of the country. The missionary returns to the homeland occasionally, and is recuperated, but the Karen has no such opportunity, and the conditions of life are very hard.

The physical conditions which have been described can be readily understood by any one who gives them the least attention. They are, however, but the prototype of other conditions which are more difficult to visualize and make real to those

who have not witnessed them, but which are, nevertheless, even more serious. Among these are the economic conditions. The Karens have a saying handed down from the elders:

"Children and grandchildren, in the last days, the earth will become so narrow as to leave no room to so much as sit down in it." And this saying seems now indeed to be coming true, so far as Burma is concerned. A hundred years ago, the Karen had no need to concern himself seriously as to where to gain his livelihood. He lived in constant fear of his oppressors, to be sure, but economic conditions did not trouble him. His wants were simple and easily met. Land there was in abundance which he might cultivate at his pleasure, and thus secure his living. But, few countries in the world are more lavishly endowed by nature than is Burma; it is by far the richest of the provinces of India. A famine is almost unknown. Once in forty or fifty years, to be sure, in the hill tracts, all the bamboos of a certain variety go to seed at once. The rats feed on the seed and propagate enormously. When they have eaten up all the seed of the bamboo, they descend on the fields of rice and strip them of absolutely every kernel of grain. When this source of provender is exhausted, they sometimes migrate in great hordes to other parts to carry on their work of destruction there. The writer has been credibly informed of such a migration of rats which took place forty or fifty

years ago near Shwegyin when the rodents came down from the mountains on the east in vast multitudes, those in front driven by those behind, until they crossed the river on the other side, where they fought with one another for places on the little ridges of earth between the rice plots and myriads of them were drowned. But at the worst, the devastation wrought in this way is of rare occurrence and is confined to a comparatively narrow and sparsely settled range of country.

Aside from these sporadic and relatively insignificant times of scarcity, the land brings forth abundantly, for there is never a failure of the rains; and it was not to be expected that so rich a country would be overlooked by the impoverished and often famine-stricken people of the adjacent countries of India and China. These are, therefore, flocking into Burma in great numbers. Comparatively few of them are becoming permanent residents; They are there to suck out the richness of the country and return home to live in, what for them is, princely comfort. But they are drawing steadily upon the resources of Burma and making life in that land more and more difficult. The Burmans themselves are also awakening to the value of their inheritance and are bringing the soil under cultivation in a manner which was not thought of in the time of their kings. The consequence is that the desirable lands are nearly all taken up, and the struggle for existence is becoming more and

more difficult. It is said that one method of torture sometimes practiced by the American Indians was to wrap up their victims in a fresh hide and place him out in the sun. As the hide dried up under the influence of the sun's rays, it tightened upon the man enclosed and slowly pressed out his life. If one can conceive of the feelings of that man, one can understand, in a measure, what is happening to the Karens of Burma. They cannot migrate to other lands. Their peaceful habits and manner of life amid the solitudes of their hills has disqualified them for that. But their own country is being invaded by foreign hordes, they are being pressed on every side, and fields which a generation ago were almost valueless are now beyond their reach.

Thus far the Karen has held his own fairly well. How he does it is a mystery to even the most experienced missionary. In many ways the Karen seems inefficient, easy-going and wasteful; yet among the Burmans he has the reputation of being able to secure land and amass wealth as the Burmans themselves cannot do. Certain it is that wherever there is a Karen village, there are almost sure to be on the fringes Burmese parasites who have no visible means of support, but really make their living off the Karens. Nevertheless the economic problem which faces Karen Christians is a very serious one. To them it is entirely new. There is nothing in the previous experience of their

race to fit them for it. And surely enough it seems that their own graphic prophecy will come true, the land will become narrower and smaller, until there is no room in it to sit down on—as if men were crowded so close together that they could not recline or even sit, but had to stand.

But that which most concerns the Christian student of missions is the religious situation, and of this it is to be said that, notwithstanding the splendid work which has already been accomplished in the spreading of the gospel in Burma, this is perhaps the most serious condition of all, and it bids fair to become more and more exacting. Too often it has been represented that the heathen is hungering for the gospel. Would that it were true! The natural mind is enmity against God, and already the antagonism between heathenism and Christianity is very marked. It is truly heart-moving to note with what tactfulness the preacher of the word must conduct himself in order that he may gain access to the heathen. A young Christian worker was sent to a district where there were no disciples and the people had been brought so much under the influence of Buddhism that they hated the Christian religion almost more than the Buddhists themselves. He went alone. He entered a heathen Karen village and was soon asked his business.

"Are you Jesus Christ?" they inquired—meaning a Christian.

"No," he said, "I am not Jesus Christ."

"Are you a white book?" meaning a believer in the bible.

"No," said he, "I am not a white book."

"Are you a diver?" that is, a Baptist.

"No, I am not a diver," came the reply.

"Well, then," they said, "we will let you come into our village, but we will have nothing to do with these preachers." Then the young man asked them to let him teach their children.

"What, can you teach?" they asked, for they were greatly surprised to find a Karen who could teach. "And what can you teach?"

"Oh, Karen, and Burmese, and English."

"Do you mean to say you understand English? We never knew that a Karen could speak English," and finding a scrap of an English newspaper somewhere which had been used for wrapping paper, they brought it to him to test him. When they learned that he could not only read English, but also could converse a little in Hindustani, their admiration was unbounded. He assured them, however, that where he came from, there were Karens who knew much more than he.

"Now," he said, "let me start a school and teach your children." Most of the children were being taught in a Buddhist monastery, after the manner of the country, but a few of the stupidest were brought together and he was permitted to try his hand on them—they were so dull that he prob-

ably could not damage their comprehensions any way! What was the amazement of all to find that these pupils made more progress in their studies under him in a month than they had made before in a whole year in the monastery. This was not particularly strange, for in the monasteries children are taught by the most disapproved methods of modern pedagogy. They are made to yell out their lessons at the top of their voices—this is to assure the teacher they are studying. The boy that shouts the loudest in considered the best scholar—for no girls are allowed. If any boy fails in his lesson or makes a mistake in writing, he is given a sharp rap on the knuckles. The result is that people taught under this method cannot read unless they read aloud, and even then they often do not understand what they are reading. Many a voice is made husky and ruined for life, while the ordinary conversation of the people is loud enough to fill a large auditorium. Two men walking side by side on the public highway, conversing, can often be heard a block away.

The young man taught his little school faithfully, and soon the attendance rose from fifteen at the beginning of the rainy season to eighty-five at the close, about four months later. When he had won the confidence of the people, he said to them:

"When I first came, you asked me if I was Jesus Christ. I am not Jesus Christ, but a disciple

of his. You asked me if I was the white book. I am not the white book, but I believe in the white book, the bible. You asked me if I was a diver. I am not a diver, but a dipper." Then he was permitted to preach to them, and now a goodly number have been converted through his efforts.

A native evangelist who was preaching to a little group of people was once suddenly accosted by a group of Buddhist rowdies.

"Here you are at last!" said their leader. "We have been looking for you all day—to preach to us."

"That is very strange," replied the preacher, quietly, "for I too have been looking for you; and now what shall I preach about?"

"Oh, anything," replied his would-be audience, somewhat abashed by his calm demeanor. He preached to them an hour or two until they began to feel that their joke was growing tame, so they interrupted.

"Come, now, that is all right, but what we want to know is, which is the greater, our Buddha or your Christ." The preached hesitated a moment as if pondering deeply, then answered with a smile:

"I think I shall have to be like the rabbit."

"Like the rabbit?" they asked in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Why, have you never heard the story of the rabbit?" said the evangelist incredulously. "Then

I shall have to tell it to you." And he related the following:

Once upon a time, the lion, king of bests, summoned his subjects to smell of his breath. Now the lion had been feasting on carrion that day, so the deer, who came first, took a whiff and said:

"Your Majesty, your breath is very offensive. In fact, it is vile."

"What! do you talk that way to your king? Do you insult me?" thundered the lion, as with one stroke of his great paw he knocked the deer to the ground. Next he called to him the fox who carefully sniffed the royal breath and said:

"Oh, your Majesty, your breath is very sweet. It is as fragrant as the jasmine flower."

"What! You know my breath is never fragrant! Will you lie to your king?" roared the chief, and knocked him down as he had the deer.

Next to be called was the rabbit whose heart went pit-a-pat. The lion said to him gruffly:

"How small you are! You would make just about one mouthful for such as I." This speech made the poor little rabbit's heart beat faster than ever, but he replied simply:

"This is as big as we grow." Then the great beast leaned down his shaggy head and opened his fearful jaws until the trembling little creature thought he would surely be swallowed alive.

"Smell my breath," the lion roared. The rabbit raised his little nose, and gravely sniffed once

—twice—then turned away. Again he lifted his nose, "sniff, sniff." The king awaited his decision, but again the rabbit turned away. Thus he did a third time and a fourth until the king, becoming impatient, cried:

"There, now, you have smelled times enough. What does it smell like?"

"Your Majesty," murmured the rabbit, "I live in the deep jungle; I go out in the early morning to graze in the meadows; the dew falls on my head, and I have such a terrible cold that your breath does not smell of anything."

Of course the lion could do nothing to the rabbit, and when the rowdies saw the point of the story, they realized that they could get no advantage of the preacher, and good-naturedly withdrew.

One could perhaps wish that the preacher had been more bold and had declared fearlessly the superiority of Christ to Buddha, but he understood the temper of the people with whom he was dealing, and he probably did the wiser thing. He disarmed his antagonists, and at the same time won their respect for his sagacity, and if, at a later time, he had an opportunity to meet any of them singly, he would find them at least cordial to him and perhaps open to his instructions.

These incidents illustrate present conditions only. They show that already the Christian evangelist must use wisdom and discretion in dealing with the

heathen. These are probably more difficult to reach, in some respects, now than they were fifty years ago, and conditions are heading up for a still mightier struggle later on. Burma is the stronghold of Buddhism, which is, without doubt, the best equipped system of heathen philosophy and religion in existence. This faith is becoming more and more conscious of itself, and is planning for a settled conflict with Christianity. The Young Men's Buddhist Association is being organized in competition with the Young Men's Christian Association; Buddhist Sunday Schools are being held in imitation of Christian Sunday Schools. So far as possible, wherever there is a mission day school a Buddhist day school is being started alongside of it. And, not content to let the native Buddhist fight it out by himself, men of so-called Christian lands are doing their best to embitter the conflict. The writings of Tom Paine and other western atheists and agnostics are being published and circulated broadcast. Not infrequently the missionary is approached by some disciple who has become perplexed by such propaganda. Some people are troubled because they think that crass Tom Paineism is being revamped and taught under a new guise in some of the theological schools of America, but, even if that were true, when one knows of the conscienceless way in which those long exploded criticisms of the bible are being used to hinder the cause of truth in heathen lands, one

feels like the old-time minister who, when asked if he believed in deacons' dancing, said, yes, he wished the deacons would do all the dancing. What if a few scholars in America are disposed to put a new dress on ancient forms of agnosticism and call it by some more euphonious name! Would that they had it all, for it would do less harm there, where people of intelligence are able to estimate it at its true value than on the mission field, where the Christian converts already have problems enough of their own, and, however true and loyal they may be, nevertheless lack the heritage of Christian tradition and doctrine and life which gives firmness and stability to their brethren of the West.

Is the part of the missionary clear? The outlook, although gloomy, is by no means hopeless. As to the physical surroundings of the people, with advancement in understanding and enlightenment these will gradually improve. Of course the diseases which prevail cannot be at once suppressed; they must be met with intelligence and courage. The government is doing what it can for the relief of the people. It has its hospitals with doctors in charge who dispense medicines freely to all that come, and these hospitals are placed in nearly every important center. But they cannot reach all the people, and there is needed some one to act as intermediary and bring the hospitals and the people together. For Karens have their ideas of medi-

cine as have westerners and they are not to be lightly convinced of the superiority of other methods to their own. They talk impressively of the ninety-eight kinds of wind in the system, as occidental doctors, not so very many years ago, used to discourse learnedly of the humors of the body. To be sure, they do not always succeed in curing the ailments of mankind, but there are others who also fail. On the other hand, they sometimes seem to achieve results where scientifically trained physicians have been baffled. The writer has been credibly informed of instances in which cases of tetanus that had been given up as hopeless by foreign doctors, have been cured. As to western notions, what could be more absurd, from the Karen standpoint, than to suppose that there is any connection between malaria and mosquitoes, or that the germ of cholera may be lurking in water which appears to be perfectly pure and sweet, or that the remedy for hydrophobia is to be found in something taken from a rabbit? Some are beginning to appreciate the value of western methods, but it is not to be wondered at that not all do so. The missionary, as he travels about among his people, even though he may have had no medical training, carries with him simple remedies for the healing of the sick, and the fact that he has a sense of racial differences and prejudices and knows how to make allowances for them, enables him to accomplish oftentimes what those who are ignorant of such

things or less patient than he, cannot do. Moreover, he can be depended upon to persevere in his work of instilling broader ideas and more just conceptions.

The economic problem is difficult, but it is not to be despaired of. No doubt it demands prompt attention, for other indigenous races have succumbed to far less strenuous conditions than are confronting the Karens. Some missionaries are already giving earnest consideration to it. It deserves careful and thorough-going study. The solution probably lies not in pampering the people in any way, or in trying to make their conditions any easier—which would be a perfectly futile thing to attempt—but in teaching them how to meet the conditions and overcome them by their own skill and industry. To this end are required men of special training who shall make a thorough study of the situation on the ground and give that initial impetus which the people cannot themselves get without assistance. In a later chapter, the possibilities along this line will be mentioned more at length; suffice it here to point out the importance of the subject.

Of the religious conditions now confronting the Karens, and of the great spiritual conflict which awaits the entire Christian world, it is enough to say that no one who believes in the promises of God can doubt what the outcome will be. Truth will prevail. The gospel of grace will triumph.

One who is worthy of all blessing will be crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But if not only the subtlest minds of the East, but also some of the best trained minds of the West are to be arrayed on the side of error and falsehood, shall the native Christians be left to fight out the battle alone? Let it be remembered that some of the most regrettable mistakes of the past in mission policy have been made in leaving new converts from heathenism too soon to themselves. The Karen Christians of Burma may, in many respects, challenge comparison with the people of God anywhere, but, as has been said before, they have not back of them that long tradition of Christian life and service and doctrine which have made their western brethren strong.

But what if the missionary cannot help, he may at least be able to cheer. It was a lonely little village in the jungle. The visitor was asked to go and see a man who was a paralytic. He found him a pitiful object, almost helpless, lying by the hearth —which was merely a slightly raised place on the floor of the wretched hut where a sufficient quantity of ashes had been placed so that a fire might be built on them without setting the house in a blaze, and as he lay there the filth of the hearth had blown upon him and covered him. He could not bathe himself or do anything for his comfort. A niece was there to care for him. She did what she could, but she was young and found him a

burden to her, poor thing. The missionary of course could do nothing to cure the disease. He simply spoke a few words of cheer—there seemed, oh, so little that he could say—offered a prayer, and went away. The next year he came to the place again and learned that the man was still living. When he called to see him, he said to the missionary:

"Teacher, since you were here last year I have often been so miserable that I wanted to put an end to my own life, but I have thought of what you said, and that has strengthened me."

Was it worth while? Is it ever worth while to cheer the people of God when one cannot help them?

The ponies in the midst of the maddening current, the steersman at the stern, the man in the boat—this is the picture. The maddening current of conditions surrounding the disciples has been described, however inadequately. Thank God, there is a boat there, and at the stern, strong, ready, resourceful, stands the Master. Is the missionary needed? Let him who is thoughtful consider.

XIII

KAREN CHARACTERISTICS

THE man in the boat cheering and encouraging his struggling ponies who know his voice is the picture which has been drawn, in a previous chapter, of the missionary in his relations to the native Christians under his care. The great task of the missionary is to help, encourage and strengthen God's people in every way he can. In order to do so he must win their confidence, and in order to win their confidence he must know them intimately and have a sympathetic understanding of their lives, their thoughts and their inmost desires.

What are some of the dominant characteristics of the Karen people? Their physical appearance has already been briefly described. They are short of stature, supple and active. A man six feet tall towers among them almost like a giant. In features, they have the broad, flat face, with the wide nostrils of the Mongolian; their skin is light brown in color, not unlike that of the Chinese, but they have not the latter's almond eyes. The hair is straight and black. Men as well as women formerly wore their hair long, and did it up in a ball-shaped knot on top of the head, but now they are

more and more adopting the customs of white people and cutting it short. In general, the Karens have good powers of endurance, especially those who live in the hills.

Many Karens of the present day are coming to wear the costume of the Burmese, with its flowing skirts and short, loose coats, but the typical Karen costume is exceedingly simple. For the men, it consists of a sleeveless jacket made out of two straight pieces of cloth. This cloth is woven in a small hand loom, and is only twelve to fifteen inches wide. The two strips are sewn together at the sides in such a way as to have much the appearance of a bag, but with openings, where the bottom of the bag would be, for the head and arms. This "bag" is slipped on with the mouth down, and reaches to a little below the knees. It is the sole garment of the men except for a narrow, straight piece of cloth sometimes worn as a turban. The material is white cotton, often with red stripes or bands across the bottom of the jacket. In the olden days, the number and breadth of these stripes used to indicate the tribe or family of the wearer, much as the Scotch clans have their special plaids. In regard to the costume of the women, customs differ according to locality. In some parts women wear a long, white jacket of the same pattern as the men, but reaching down to the feet, until they are married. This was, perhaps, the universal custom in the early days. After marriage they wear a

A KAREN MAN POUNDING RICE IN THE MOUNTAINS

KAREN WOMAN WEAVING ON THE KAREN LOOM

shorter jacket and a skirt. The former is usually of dark blue cotton spun, woven and dyed by the owner herself. These jackets are frequently ornamented very tastefully with simple patterns, embroidered in red thread and with white seeds, of a variety found in the jungle, about an inch long and as large around as a coarse darning-needle. These seeds are very hard and have the appearance almost of ivory. The skirt consists of two straight pieces of native cloth, sewn together lengthwise and then at the ends, making the skirt the same width at the top and bottom. To fasten it no pins, buttons, hooks and eyes or puckering strings are used; the skirt is simply folded over from one side to the other in front and the outer fold tucked in. The cloth for the skirt has stripes of various widths and colors running the length of the goods so in the finished garment the stripes run horizontally around the person. A turban of narrow, white cloth, decorated with a design in red, is thrown gracefully around the head. The dress of the men is so plain as to be almost ugly, but that of the women is often very attractive and pleasing.

By occupation the Karens, with the exception of those who, owing to their educational advantages, have taken up such professions as teaching, law, and medicine, are nearly all farmers. The oriental is generally supposed to be lazy, but those who know the manner of life of the Karens would not be likely to give them such a title. There are two

kinds of farming in Burma, lowland and upland. Rice is the staple product of the soil in Lower Burma, where the Karens live, and lowland farming is the cultivation of rice on the plains, while upland farming is the cultivation of rice in the hills. The former is arduous enough. Soon after the rains begin, about the first of June, when the ground is well soaked up one of the small plots into which the field is divided is plowed and carefully harrowed with a rude native harrow until all the grasses and weeds have been removed. Then, with the water standing about six inches deep, the seed is sown broadcast, very thickly in this little plot, which is really a nursery bed. While this is growing up, others are being prepared in a similar way. When the rice in the nursery plot is a foot and a half high, it is pulled up by the roots and gathered into bundles. Then it is transplanted, blade by blade, about a foot apart over the other plots. As the rice grows up it stools out, sometimes as high as sixty shoots coming out of a single head, and these fill up the intervening spaces. When the grain is ripe, it is reaped by means of a hand sickle, gathered into bundles or sheaves and threshed by being trodden out under the feet of oxen or buffaloes.

But arduous as is the work of lowland cultivation, upland farming is still more difficult. Perhaps it cannot be better described than by telling a Karen folk-tale of the crow. It is said that in the

beginning the crow was asked how it would make its living, would it do upland farming? The crow was wary, and turning its head first on one side and then on the other reflectively, it asked:

"How do you make your living by upland farming?"

"First of all," it was told, "you must cut down a fresh tract of forest." It should be borne in mind that the Karen living in the hills has to do this for every crop of rice that he raises. He may require from thirty to fifty acres, according to the size of his family and the quality of the soil. He lets the timber lie for about a month until it is dried out by the heat of the sun, and then burns it over, and the ashes seem to fertilize the soil enough so that he can raise a single crop. After that, he must let the land lie fallow for from five to fifteen or even twenty years, to grow forest again before he can cultivate another crop. When the crow was told that he must cut down a tract of forest he asked:

"Do you eat then?"

"No," he was informed, "you have to let it lie for about a month to dry out."

"Well, do you eat then?" he inquired again.

"Oh, no, you have to burn it over."

"Well, do you eat then?" said the crow.

"No, you have to grub out the roots and gather the pieces which have not been burned the first time, and have a second burning."

"Well, do you eat then?"

"Oh, no, you have to take a small stick and dibble the ground for the seed, making holes at suitable distances apart and dropping in the grain."

"Well, do you eat then?"

"No, you have to let the seed sprout up and grow."

"Well, do you eat then?"

"Oh, no, while the rice is growing, you have to take a knife and cut out the weeds. You do this two or three times in the course of a season."

"Well, do you eat then?"

"Oh, no, you have to make a fence around the entire field." And the fences which the Karens make around their fields are really quite remarkable. They are constructed of bamboo or of brush, anything they find conveniently at hand in the jungle, but they have to be so closely woven as to be impenetrable to deer or wild boar, or else the crops would be destroyed.

"Well," inquired the crow again, "do you eat then?"

"No, indeed, for when the grain begins to fill out, you have to drive the birds away." To do this a bamboo clapper is used, that is a bamboo, perhaps five or six inches in diameter, which has been split down most of its length. One part is firmly fixed to a bit of framework and to the other is attached a string which is carried off to a small

hut or watch-tower in a distant part of the field. When the birds come, as they often do in large flocks, especially parrots, the watcher pulls the string and then releases it, thus sounding the clapper, to frighten the birds away.

"Well, do you eat then?" again came the crow's question.

"Oh, no, when the grain is ripe, you have to take a sickle and reap it."

"Well, do you eat then?"

"No, after you have reaped the grain, you have to gather it into bundles and thresh it." The grain is threshed by taking the small sheaves in the hand and beating them on the rim of a large basket, perhaps eight or ten feet in diameter, made of coarse bamboo splints. The rim is of rattan as big as a man's wrist, and the whisp of grain is beaten against this until the heads fall off into the basket.

"Well, do you eat then?" persisted the crow.

"Oh, no, after you have threshed out the grain, you have to winnow it." For this purpose, the grain, mixed with coarse chaff, which has fallen into the basket, is taken out and thrown up into the air and the wind blows the chaff away.

"Well, do you eat then?" This again from the crow.

"No, you have to build a granary." The people do not live on their farms; they are obliged to live in villages for the sake of mutual protection

and their fields may be miles away from their homes. They do not store the rice in their villages, but build small granaries for it out in the fields.

"But do you eat then?"

"Oh, no, you have to carry the grain to the village, from time to time as you require it, in a basket on your back."

"But do you eat then?"

"Oh, no, you have to pound it out to separate the husk from the kernel." This is done by hand, by means of a wooden pestle and mortar.

"Well, do you eat then?"

"No, you have to separate the kernels from the husks." This is done by a curious process of sifting the pounded grain in a shallow tray. With a peculiar motion of the hand and wrist, the husks and lighter parts are made to fly off the tray, leaving only the edible portions.

"But do you eat then?"

"No, you have to wash it and cook it." In this manner the whole process was described from beginning to end, and the crow said in disgust:

"No, I will not make my living by upland farming. I will steal instead!" So from that day to this, the crow has been making his living by stealing, but he has never forgotten his repeated question, "Do you eat then? Do you eat then?"—which in Karen is, "Aw-ah, aw-ah," a better imitation of the call of the crow than is, "Caw, caw."

The life of the hill Karen is indeed exceedingly

KARENS REAPING PADDY

arduous. He must begin his operations in the field in February, and continue them almost constantly until October. From November to January he must be collecting, preparing and putting in place bamboos for the building or repair of his house. During any spare intervals he must be gathering roots and herbs to eke out his meager provisions.

In the olden times, marriages among the Karens were always arranged by the elders or by friends of the interested parties. It would have been considered very improper for a young man to say he would like to marry a certain young woman, or for a young woman to express a preference for any particular young man. It is still by no means unusual, even among Christians, for marriages to be arranged by mutual friends, and the parties not to meet until their wedding day. To the occidental all this seems, of course, quite an absurd way of proceeding, yet the results among orientals probably prove to be happy as often as in western lands where the young people decide everything for themselves. With the Karens, courtship comes after marriage. The writer has been told of instances in which, when the wedding ceremony had been performed, the woman would have nothing to do with her husband. But the latter did not take it ill. He simply went away and stayed awhile, then came back, hung around a little, helping in any way he could, went away, returned after

a time and so on, until at length—it might not be before a year had passed—he won the affection of the woman he had married and they lived happily together as husband and wife. Many a Karen who has been married in this way has developed such a devoted attachment for his wife that if she died he would not marry again. In fact, although no hard and fast custom required it, this was the usual practice among Karens in the olden time.

Karen ideas of death and the under world are very vague. The writer once went to a heathen Karen funeral and, among other things, saw a shallow bamboo tray turned upside down. On the bottom of the tray was crudely drawn in charcoal a representation of a tree with its branches. Some one would take a pebble, put it on the extreme end of a branch of the tree, repeat some kind of a lingo, and as he did so, move the pebble down to the trunk and then to the foot of the tree. This was teaching the spirit of the dead to climb a tree. For, according to the Karen idea, in the spirit world, all the points of the compass and all directions are reversed. Any one can readily understand how that might be. Conceive of the earth as a flat disk; living people are on the upper side of the disk with their feet towards it; the spirits of the dead are on the under side, with their feet up towards the disk. It follows that what is east to those above is west to those below, west is east, north is south and south is north, up is down and

down is up. With some it is customary, as soon as a person dies, to tie one end of a string to the finger of the deceased and the other end to the tail of a dog, with the idea that the dog will act as guide through the shadows of the under world, and one of the bitterest epithets which the heathen sometimes address to the Christian preacher is that of Pilot Dog. Many other fantastic conceptions are held which need not be mentioned here.

The Karen account of earthquakes is that a giant monster, corresponding somewhat to the Greek Atlas, has been condemned to support the earth until all the inhabitants have died off. Now and then a worm wriggles out upon his shoulder, and he concludes that the people on earth have all died, that the worms have consumed their bodies, and, finding nothing else to eat, have gone in search of further forage. He therefore concludes that his task is at an end, and proceeds to let down the earth. This produces the earthquake. Consequently, whenever the heathen feel an earthquake, they always call out:

"We are here still! We are here still!" and then he rights it up again. The fact that their method of putting a stop to earthquakes has been successful every time thus far demonstrates to their minds the truth of their theory.

Intellectually, the Karens are really brighter than they are likely at first to appear. Owing to a certain shyness on their part one needs to be pretty

well acquainted with them to know of what they are capable. Those who do not understand their language and see them side by side with the Burmese, usually think they are stupid. This is particularly the case when the Burman has the initial advantage of using his own language; moreover, he is free from the shyness which oppresses the Karen—the result probably of his hundreds of years of political subjection—so he expresses himself more readily. The Burman is usually able to show off for what he is worth, perhaps for a little more. The Karen, on the other hand, one may have to know a long while before he really knows him at all. Those who see the Burman and the Karen side by side, day after day and year after year, do not feel that the latter is the inferior of the two. The writer has been told by instructors in schools for higher education, where there are various nationalities in residence, that Karen students do better in their studies on the whole than Burmese students.

Probably no one would claim for the Karen that he has a philosophical mind. He has no liking for delving into the mystery of things which no one can know anything about. He has originated no speculative scheme like the "chain of contingent existences" of the Buddhists. He has no vocabulary for expressing such ideas. His language is wanting in abstract terms, and many ideas which are perfectly familiar to the occidental almost defy

expression until they have been put into a concrete form. But the lack of such terms does not prove that these people are incapable of deep and sustained thought. Not many years ago it was supposed that some of the aboriginal tribes of Australia were entirely lacking in mathematical ability. They had no way of counting in their language above four or five; but that was solely because in their simple manner of life they had no need to count above that number. Now, members of those same tribes are employed by sheep-raisers to count their sheep. The sheep are made to go through a narrow passage, and these men will count by the hundreds and thousands without ever making an error. The world in which the Karen has lived has not called out his powers of thought but that by no means proves that his analytical faculties are wanting. Nor is simplicity of language altogether a disadvantage. The clearest waters are often the deepest. Simplicity of language is often a help to clarity of thought. In fact to be compelled to speak or write in a language like the Karen is an excellent discipline for the mind. The preacher, for instance, must know with absolute clearness what he has to say, but if he has thought his subject through and has a fair command of the language, he will usually be able to express himself. Generally speaking, anything which is worth saying in any language can be said in the Karen. Of course the method of expression must be suited to

the people, but that is merely a matter of rhetoric, of the choice of suitable illustrations, figures of speech and so forth; the real essence of the thought may remain unchanged. The writer has preached a sermon with equal acceptance, so far as he could judge, in Karen one Sunday to an audience composed of pupils and teachers in a middle school, and in English the next Sunday to an audience composed largely of missionaries. If any one thinks that because the Karens are a simple minded people he can dish out almost anything to them, he is likely to be disappointed. The best that he can give, however wide may have been the range of his previous preparation, he is likely to find is none too good. On the other hand, if he has something worth while to offer, he will feel no lack of responsiveness and appreciation.

But it is of temperamental characteristics that the missionary needs perhaps to know the most if he would be a helpful guide. And it has to be confessed that the Karens are not easy to understand. This is probably due to the long years of oppression through which they have passed and which have necessarily meant for them repression. On first acquaintance they seem—and it is probably their own feeling about themselves—to be a meek, docile, submissive, almost obsequious people. In fact their own name for themselves comes near to meaning "easy." The writer has frequently heard Karen preachers dwell on this as represent-

ing one trait in the Karen character. But men are usually the opposite of what they profess to be, or really think they are. No miser regards himself as penurious. On the other hand the true philanthropist never prides himself on his philanthropy, but may the rather often upbraid himself for his want of charity. The proud considers himself humble, and the really humble is fearful of his pride. The honest man need never say anything about his honesty; it is only rogues who have occasion to do that. Those who boast themselves of their liberalism are often the most bigoted, and those who make no pretentions to broad-mindedness may be really the least narrow in their views. And so a person who speaks of himself as being "easy," is generally about the last person in the world whom one may expect to find subservient. It almost seems as if the Karens themselves had felt this, and so they do not actually call themselves "easy," but "just going to be easy," and the significant fact is that they never arrive at that goal. On the contrary, they are quite likely to prove high spirited, independent, determined.

The writer once had an experience on which he has often reflected with interest. Hucksters and venders of sweet-meats were giving much trouble by coming into the school compound and selling to the pupils food which was unfit to eat. For a time they were driven out whenever they could be discovered, but, that method proving unavailing,

the rule was laid down that no pupil should buy. Not long after that, about fifteen of the pupils, including some of the best boys in school, were caught in the very act of buying from a vender. They were duly brought up for discipline. It was decided that they must confess before the entire school body and promise not to repeat the offense. But when the time came and their names were called out, to the surprise of the missionary they rose one by one, and so far from making confession or showing regret in any way, they defended their action and intimated that they were quite disposed to do the same thing again. One only showed any willingness to comply with the requirements which had been laid down. The missionary listened quietly until all had spoken, and then said:

"I am perplexed at this. You know that you have broken the rules of the school, which were meant for your own good, and the requirements which have been laid upon you are none too rigid. I know, too, that many of you are Christians, and want to do what is pleasing to your Saviour. And yet all of you save one have shown a defiant spirit. I do not understand it. Now, first of all, I want to know that my own skirts are clear, and if the difficulty rests in any way with me, I want you to say so. If I have done wrong, I am ready to confess it and make it right." Then some of the pupils, said that they did feel aggrieved at some rather sharp remarks which they had heard the

missionary make. The missionary expressed regret, and finally the pupils agreed that from that time on they would abide by the rules of the school. The missionary did not learn the full effect of his action until about a year after, when the headmaster of the school told him that the pupils felt so ashamed of themselves to think that the missionary had been willing to confess his fault and apologize for it while they had attempted to justify themselves and had shown a defiant spirit, that they did not know what to do. In any case from that time on the school experienced no further difficulty from the venders; they might come, but no one would buy.

At the same time that this incident occurred, a fellow missionary was visiting in the home of the writer. The former had had special training in pedagogy and had had much experience in the management of Burmese schools. On hearing what had happened he said:

"Well, perhaps you are right, but I would not do that way in dealing with Burmese pupils." In the same country, living side by side, are the two races, the Karens and the Burmans. The Karen seems to those who do not know him to be subservient, the Burman high-spirited. In fact, the contrary appears to be the case. Certain it is that the Karen may be led, but never, never driven.

Other temperamental characteristics of the Karens might be dwelt upon. They are honest,

truthful, generous, affectionate, appreciative, kindly, sympathetic, well-intentioned. The writer has dwelt on this other characteristic more fully, perhaps because he admires the granite. There are two uses of the word "tact." As frequently employed it refers to such conduct as is calculated, by shrewd manipulation, to get another person to do what he would not otherwise do. This is despicable. But true and honorable tact involves the rare faculty of getting the point of view of the other man and considering any question which arises from that position. Any one who would deal with people of another race, as the missionary has to do, must learn to sink any personal likes and dislikes, to suffer often the defeat of his plans, and to abide in patience, not desiring to lord it over God's heritage, but content if in love and meekness, he is permitted to be a co-worker with them in the service of the kingdom. Such an one in association with the Karens will find his respect for them growing continually, and, if he is a man of real worth in himself, he will prefer that they should have a mind of their own, that they should think out their own problems and make their own decisions, even if not always wise, rather than that they should simply listen to what he may say.

XIV

A NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY

REFERENCE has been made in a previous chapter to the stress of the physical, the economic and the religious conditions in which the Karen Christians of Burma are situated. The physical will doubtless be met in time with the advance of civilization. Even tigers and snakes must retire before the encroachments on their wild domains of human progress and culture. Of the seriousness of the religious conflict and of the obligation resting upon American Christians to help in meeting it, something further will be said in another connection.

The economic stress is present and urgent. In a large majority of cases, the Karen youth return from school to the farm. They come back with a broader outlook and keener minds, but, beyond that, with practically no training which will help them in meeting these new and difficult conditions. The school system among these people grew up at the demand, already noted, of the Karens for knowledge. With certain necessary changes and omissions, it followed the traditional lines of edu-

cation in western lands. Even in those countries vocational training was almost unheard of until within perhaps a decade. Naturally, therefore, both government and missionaries emphasized in their curriculum those subjects which for them meant education. Many, however, are now coming to feel that in devoting so large a proportion of time to literary studies alone, they are not only losing an opportunity to help the Karen of today meet the rigors of his life, but are also giving a one-sided view of western civilization and the Christian religion. For, nothwithstanding the aspersions which are often cast against the church, because of the supposed estrangement between it and the laboring man, it may be said that one of the most distinguishing and marked characteristics of Christianity as against heathenism, and even of evangelical as against formalistic Christianity, is that it honors labor of the hands.

Most of the first disciples were laboring men. Jesus himself was brought up at the carpenter's bench. Paul labored with his hands unceasingly even in the midst of most strenuous spiritual endeavors. A hundred years ago, in England, no gentleman was supposed to work, and the revival of evangelical religion, which began under the Wesleys, is probably largely responsible for the fact that today it is rather to the discredit of any one to be idle. Englishmen like to point out that the king himself is a busy man. In America the

economic situation, together with the comparative poverty of the early settlers, have combined from the first, to make men honor labor of the hands. But wherever there has been any serious departure from this norm, it has in general been due either to a direct and distinct ebb in the religious life of the community or to its invasion by unevangelized hordes from without, who have brought with them and subtly disseminated an atmosphere which, by its false emphasis on class distinctions is foreign to the essence of the Christian religion, and really antagonistic to true self-respect and highmindedness. Whatever may be said to the contrary, it is certainly of the very soul and spirit of a genuine Christianity to honor all honest labor; and in spite of its detractors, Christianity is the only really democratic religion in the world. It is therefore with no little apprehension that the missionary notes a growing tendency on the part of the brighter pupils among the Karens to covet some position in which they can earn their living without manual labor, instead of using their faculties in plans for the improvement of their family acres. For improvement in agriculture is one of the benefits of civilization which the Karen people need most of all, in view of the present stress, and are least able to get by their own unaided efforts.

It is only within comparatively recent years that adequate attention has been given to this branch of human knowledge even in America. It was for-

merly supposed that almost any one could be a farmer. Now, on the other hand, it is coming to be understood that the farmer, more than almost any one else, in order to be really successful and accomplish the best results along the line of his business, needs to have excellent initial ability and fine preparation. But it was long before people fully appreciated this fact. For many years few of the brightest young men went to colleges of agriculture, and even for state schools, the appropriations of legislatures were often niggardly. Now departments and schools of agriculture can successfully demand almost anything they require for their advancement, and in normal times the attendance at schools of this kind comprises many of the brightest and best. Few more attractive opportunities are offered to the best equipped young men of the rising generation than along the line of scientific farming. And yet this condition of affairs was not brought about without a struggle. Not until, in one of the American schools, it was found that improvements in dairy products alone had more than compensated the state for all it had spent on its agricultural schools during a period of many years, did people begin to realize the possibilities of which this department of human knowledge was capable. Even today scientific farming is too little practiced, and long years will yet be required before the possibilities for development before the American farmer are exhausted.

In Burma, among an enlightened people, it is still less to be expected that an intelligent interest will be taken in agricultural experimentation and investigation which would stimulate the people to devote to it, of themselves, the time, energy, painstaking care and considerable financial expenditure which would enable them to improve their inherited and long established methods. Many of the Christian Karens are eager to improve their conditions, but they have seen nothing better, and they do not know how to make more effective what they have. If, therefore, they are to make any considerable advancement along agricultural lines in the near future, it would seem that this must be brought to them from without. The government is sincerely trying to do what it can. It has its Department of Agriculture, with a Director and two or three deputies, educated in English or Canadian institutions, and a corps of native assistants. It is starting seed farms and experiment stations, and is endeavoring, to the best of its ability, to discover and promulgate better methods. But, however much the government may accomplish along these lines, comparatively little benefit is likely to result to the people at large, especially to the Karens, in their far-off villages, without the intervention of the missionary. The latter are in touch with the people, and have their confidence; they are able to reach them and lead them as government officials could never do. As has been said

elsewhere, they are specialists in that line. This fact the government fully realizes, and it is largely for this reason that, to such a considerable extent, general education is left in the hands of the missionaries.

To any one who considers the agricultural situation in Burma, even though he may know very little indeed about agriculture, problems present themselves in plenty. With reference to lowland farming, that is, farming on the plains, the soil is at present suffering constant deterioration, owing no doubt to the fact that there is no rotation of crops. Just what should be done to remedy this condition, it is difficult to say, as climatic conditions are ill suited to the cultivation of anything but rice. Commercial fertilizers might be used to some extent, but they are so expensive that their value would have to be very thoroughly proved, else they would not be employed extensively. The use of green fertilizers has been suggested, but so far as the writer knows, has never been given a fair trial. The proposal is to cultivate the soy bean, or a kind of split pea called dhal, the roots of which gather and deposit nitrogen, and to plow under the stalks. This might be practicable, provided seasonable and other conditions permitted.

It would probably be best at the outset, however, to endeavor to enrich the soil by adopting improved local methods with which the people are already somewhat familiar. The mind naturally

turns to the use of manures; but, to begin with, the number of cattle in the country is inadequate for the purpose. This is chiefly because the Burmese are Buddhists and believe that to take animal life is one of the worst sins, hence are not naturally meat eaters. Furthermore, their cattle being of a very poor variety for dairy purposes, they have never become much accustomed to the use of dairy products. Now, however, the religious prejudice is being gradually overcome, so that the people are more and more learning to relish a meat diet. Some even like butter; but cheese, certainly, is still a mystery to the average inhabitant.

But even if the demand for products of this kind should cause the supply of cattle to increase greatly—as would be necessary for the adequate fertilization of the land—there would, under present conditions, be difficulty in securing grazing facilities for them. Government has set apart so-called grazing grounds where cattle may go, but this was done years ago and the grounds are now quite insufficient. In any case, the land in these is, for the most part, so low as to be unsuited for any stock except the carabao or water buffalo. Some means would therefore need to be devised by which cattle could be furnished with a sufficient supply of fodder. Perhaps the use of ensilage would be worth trying, although this again involves difficulties. A cheap form of silo would have to be devised. Special crops with

which to fill the silos would need to be grown; what these should be is uncertain. The writer has seen an American government report which indicates that rice stalks have sometimes been successfully used for ensilage. In almost every neighborhood in Burma, there are tracts of land which are too low for the cultivation of the ordinary kinds of rice. There is, however, a variety which grows in deep water. It is sown while the water is still shallow, and as the water rises, the grain grows with it and keeps pretty well up to the surface. Men go out in boats to reap it. It may be that this rice could be cultivated to be used exclusively for ensilage. Near the close of the rains and during the early part of the dry season, Indian Maize might be grown successfully in some places. Granted that there was an adequate supply of cattle, and that sufficient fodder could be provided for them, there would still remain the problem of the care and use of the manure and of the instruction of the people in the value of its conservation.

Many of the native cattle are fine looking animals. They are used chiefly for drawing carts. The native never thinks of fattening cattle for the market. If he allows one to be killed for beef, it is an ox which has become too old and feeble to draw a cart another inch or a cow which can never give another drop of milk. The cattle are allowed to run promiscuously and little is known about

stock breeding, although it is probable that the native cattle are capable of great improvement. The consequence is that little profit is derived from them as compared with what might be the case.

Although rice is a staple product of the country, the problem of improving the quality and quantity of its production is one worthy of consideration. Upwards of sixty different varieties of rice are found in Burma, but they have become so intermixed that it is almost impossible to find pure seed. Pure seed should be produced and distributed to the people, and then they should be taught how to select the special variety suited to their needs, with the methods and importance of keeping it pure.

Twenty or thirty years ago oranges of good quality were grown in great abundance in Burma. Now they are scarce. A kind of blight seems to have struck nearly all the groves. The writer has communicated with the government micologist of India, but he seems not to know definitely what the disease is, nor is he aware of any cure for it. The natives of Burma are entirely ignorant of the science of tree-grafting. Many Karens would not believe such a thing possible if they did not see it mentioned in the bible. Of course they can know nothing about its advantages, although no doubt some of the fruits of the country could be greatly improved by this method. The natives of India

have already produced graft mangoes of excellent quality. The orange, the lime, the durian, the jack fruit, the guava, the custard apple and other varieties also might profitably undergo a similar process.

Agricultural implements is another subject deserving of attention. Those in use are exceedingly crude. At the same time, it is not altogether easy for one who is not an expert to devise anything better. As has been said, American plows make too deep a furrow, even if adequate means of drawing them could be discovered; American reapers crush down more grain than they reap in the small native plot. American threshing machines might possibly be used to advantage and run at a profit; but some one would have to take one out there first and demonstrate its usefulness before the natives could be expected to invest in anything of the kind. In general, western machinery could not be introduced bodily, but would have to be greatly modified to suit local needs. These and many other problems are presented in the midst of conditions which are so utterly different from those prevailing in America or, indeed, anywhere else in the world, that they would need to be carefully studied on the spot.

But, as has already been intimated, it is in upland or hill cultivation that the most serious problems present themselves, and it is here also that the greatest benefits might be expected to accrue to the

Karen people. Upland farming, as any one can see by the description given, is enormously wasteful. To think of cutting down from five to fifteen or twenty years' growth of timber for a single crop of rice is well nigh appalling. The government has tried again and again, to find some means for making it unnecessary, but is still baffled. It has gone so far as to contemplate the entire removal of the hill tribes bodily to the plains, compensating them by supplying them with lands and even with sustenance there. But such radical measures are highly objectionable and will probably never be adopted. It may be that the hills could be successfully terraced in Burma as in Japan, although this is very doubtful on account of the rains which are so heavy that they would probably wash away in a short time almost any terraces which could be built. Simpler methods, if such could be found, would be preferable. Perhaps the difficulty in raising more than one crop of rice is due to some deficiency in the soil, unfitting it for rice cultivation in particular, for wild vegetation grows there in great profusion. To supply this deficiency by taking commercial fertilizers up into the hills, where there are no roads and everything has to be carried on the backs of pack animals or of men, is out of the question. Fertilization by means of manures, even if it would supply the deficiency, which is doubtful, would be almost equally difficult for a variety of reasons, one of which is that, on ac-

count of the prevalence of wild beasts, it is difficult to raise cattle extensively in the hills. It may be that, instead of rice, other crops, such as nuts or some kinds of fruit, could be grown in the hills and exchanged for the rice of the plains. A kind of nut, called the dog nut, which is much relished by the Burmese in their cooking, grows freely and abundantly in the hills and brings a good price on the plains. If a beginning could be made in this way so that the cultivation of the hills would be more remunerative, roads could be improved, and, with better roads, facilities would be increased and other methods might be adopted. Crops which are not profitable now might prove to be profitable. There are also little gardens up in the valleys among the hills which might perhaps be improved or turned to better account. It is these gardens which really hold many of the hill Karens to their present abodes. They depend on irrigation. The soil in them is excellent, and they are kept in a high state of cultivation. At present they are used for the raising of betel nut for local consumption. They might perhaps be turned to the cultivation of much more valuable crops. In any case, it seems unquestionable that the hill districts could be made to support a vastly larger population than now, and they are the natural habitat of the Karens.

Much of the preliminary work which wouldneed to be done in order to make any project for the

improvement of agricultural conditions worth while, has already been accomplished. For the co-operation of the human element is after all one of the most vital factors in the success of any such undertaking. There is a large Christian community, consisting chiefly of farmers, which through many years of training has developed habits of independence and initiative. Among these people are not a few men of intelligence and progressiveness who are eager to adopt any suggestions for the betterment of their condition and the condition of their race. The writer was once showing some Christian Karens connected with his mission the use of a preparation called a "shrub eradicator," which had been given him by an officer of the government engineering department. The preparation, which is much like yellow clay in appearance, is first dissolved in water, and then the water is sprinkled on any weeds or other shrubbery which it is desired to destroy. In two or three days, the leaves turn yellow, and the shrub dies. One of the Karens asked for a handful of the preparation. As he lived some distance away, the missionary saw nothing more of the man for several months. Then he appeared again and asked for some more of the eradicator. The missionary asked him what he had done with the former supply, and he said he had used it to destroy an annoying parasite which is frequently to be seen growing on trees in Burma. This parasite finds lodgment in some way

on a branch of a tree. It grows to be a shrub of considerable size, and sends rootlets up and down the branch which adhere to it very closely. One may tear off the shrub, but if a piece of the root so much as an inch in length is allowed to remain on the tree, it will grow again and thrive as before. The Karen man said he had torn off the shrub, dissolved some of the preparation, dampened a cloth with the solution and wrapped the cloth about the branch where the rootlets were. After a few days he found that the rootlets were dead and easily stripped off so that not a vestige remained. Then, in order that the tree itself might suffer no damage from the effect of the solution, he has plastered that part of the branch with mud, and found that the tree remained in a perfectly healthy condition. This showed no little degree of ingenuity on the part of the inexperienced Karen. Probably an arboricultural expert could have done no better.

The needs are great, the possibilities well nigh boundless. What can be done to meet the situation? It is quite probable that, in normal times, the government would give substantial aid if a mission were in a position to do something really worth while towards the development of the native people in scientific agriculture. There are, moreover, some things which the government would need to do if they were done at all; the construction of roads, the terracing of the hills,—if such

a plan were deemed feasible,—and the opening of fresh tracts for cultivation. In general the government is generously disposed towards projects for the betterment of the conditions of the people, but it is probable that in these present times, at least a substantial start would have to be made by private initiative before Government could be approached with any likelihood of success. It would be worse than useless to attempt much beyond school gardens on an ordinary missionary appropriation, even if to that were added possible gifts from the native churches. And yet the expense involved need not necessarily be very great. In China vast plans are on foot for medical advancement involving the expenditure of millions of money. An assured annual income of $2,000 or $3,000 would make it possible for one man, a trained missionary agricultural specialist, to devote his entire time to this phase of the work and supply him with a small appropriation for expenses, and thus enable him to enter an open door of opportunity. Naturally, he could do little theoretical work until he knew something of the language and the people, but, while he was engaged in becoming familiar with these, he could well begin work on vocational training in the schools. The supervision of school gardens in various centers would help to create a morale for scientific agriculture among the older, brighter pupils,—the class that now covets clerical posts and the like. In time, this practical

garden work could be supplemented by a simple course on the subject in the school curriculum.

The next step in the work might well be the establishment of two experiment stations, one for the study of the problems of lowland and the other for those of upland farming. There are districts where the two types are in progress in close enough proximity for one man to have general oversight of both. Pupils from the schools who had shown special aptitude for this science might be induced to specialize and train themselves for further work of the kind. Undoubtedly the missionary would be able to get experienced Christian farmers to attempt the practical solution of individual problems either at the station or on their own lands under his direction. The holding of institutes open to the people at large where instruction might be be given in farming, with demonstrations, as is done in some parts of America, might prove a good means of disseminating the results gained from the experimentation and so making it of more general value. Such institutes, if properly conducted, would doubtless be very popular and might accomplish much. As the whole scheme developed, the establishment of a special school or college of agriculture might prove to be a desirable step. This could be done gradually as native teachers were trained to give instruction. With the growth of the work might ultimately come the opening up of new lands for cultivation and perhaps the im-

provement of communications, together with anything else which would tend to the betterment of the conditions among the farming community. The youth growing up would see farming and its problems put on a par with other occupations as worthy of study, and they would be likely to feel more interest in it as a life work and attack the problems more intelligently. The total result would be to increase greatly the prosperity of the Karen people, advance them in civilization as perhaps could be done in no other way, and give them a truer conception of the many-sided completeness and adequacy of the Christian religion. And the expense, if the plan were carried out gradually in a modest way need not be very great.

Millions are being generously given today for literary colleges, and tens of millions for medical schools in the Orient. Where are the thousands to come from which will help not only to advance an entire race along the lines of improved scientific agriculture, but also to make progress in all true culture and excellence?

XV

A CALL TO ARMS

REFERENCE has been made to the stress of the religious conditions which are confronting the Karen Christians of Burma and to the great conflict of religions which awaits the people of God everywhere. As there has sprung upon the world in recent years such a general and catastrophic contest of arms as has never before been known, so there is about to break forth, has already broken forth, a spiritual conflict in comparison with which any previous clash of weapons will seem like a child's quarrel, a battle of spiritual forces in which many of the shrewdest minds of the West will unite with the subtlest minds of the East to overwhelm and put to utter rout the forces of Him who hung upon the tree of Calvary. The outcome of the struggle is certain, as sure as the promises of God, as firm as the eternal hills of truth and righteousness. But the people of God everywhere need to gird themselves afresh for the fight. Especially is it important that the Christians of America should set themselves in array, for it is to that favored land that the na-

tions of the earth must now look for light and leading, and the missionary feels keenly that his own efficiency and the strength of the work as a whole must depend in large degree on the spiritual resources which are behind him in the home land.

To nothing is the missionary more deeply sensitive than to the thought and life of God's people throughout the world. He studies the religious periodicals, he pores over the issues of the press, he notes trends and tendencies, wondering ever how they will affect the great, the world-wide issues before him. Especially is he sensitive to the varying tides of thought which have their movements now this way, now that, for he knows that sooner or later, beliefs will have their sure effect upon the life, and interpretations of doctrine will enter into and stimulate or enervate the sinews of spiritual strength.

First of all, then, there is needed on the part of God's people a deep "digging in" with regard to his word. As, in modern warfare, the soldiers at the front are wont to "dig in," to lay deep trenches in the earth, so in the revealed word, and especially in the great truths of redemption and grace, the Christian world must dig in. There is needed a revival of doctrine. By this is not meant a re-formulation of creeds or an emphasis on dogma, but a deep appreciation on the part of God's people of the great fundamental truths of the gospel, the distinguishing doctrines of the Christian

religion. Let it be understood to start out with that these are not principles which commend themselves to the natural man. As it was written of old, to the Jew they are a stumbling block and to the Greek foolishness. Yet it is to these very doctrines—not the things in which the Christian religion is like other religions, but the things which differentiate it from all other faiths—that attention needs to be especially given, and upon these that stress must be laid. The atonement, through the work upon the cross of Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God; salvation by grace through faith; the power of the living and ascended Lord in the hearts of his people by the Spirit—these are things that Buddhism and Confucianism and Hindooism and Mohammedanism know nothing of. They are distinctly hostile to every other faith, unthinkable and incomprehensible to the unregenerate man. Yet it is on these doctrines, on these great fundamental verities of Christian life and experience, that the Christian religion is based. By these the hope of God's people everywhere must stand or fall. No doubt much has already been said and written on these mighty themes, but they need still to be dwelt upon, to be studied into, to be investigated, for they are inexhaustible. There is need enough that this should be done not only for the enrichment of the religious life of God's people at home, but also for the girding up of their strength, for even in America mighty conflicts are

impending against insidious foes. But for the strengthening of the forces abroad on the firing line, it is indispensable.

But, if this deeper study of the word and meditation on its teachings are needed, still more is required a deeper consecration on the part of the people of God for the carrying forward of the work of world-wide evangelization.

The true missionary ideal is at the farthest possible remove from the spirit of asceticism. Suffering in itself has no merit or advantage on the mission field or anywhere else. Whatever may have been true in the past, it is now recognized as the duty of the missionary to maintain himself in as fair a degree of comfort and well-being as is consistent with his means and his environment. But the spirit of genuine self-sacrifice, that spirit which enables its possessor to endure all things that are needful to the accomplishment of the great end, and yet is utterly unconscious of itself, not even aware that any sacrifice is involved, that is of the essence of Christian living the world over and it is indispensable to the missionary's most effective work. For the missionary must not simply make converts, gather them into churches and instil into their hearts the principles of the gospel, but he must also seek to bring about the deepening of their spiritual life. All of these objects save the last may be accomplished by preaching and instruction, but this can seemingly be brought about by

means of example only. And it is often the case that the native Christian—it is a solemn, soul-subduing thing to say—is disciplined, chastened, refined, in the person of the missionary.

The writer may perhaps be pardoned for referring here to the experience of his father. The work of the latter at Shwegyin began, as so much of the work on the foreign field is done, amid both smiles and tears, both sunshine and shadow. Of the former mention has already been made in the conversion of Saw Tah Ree and the formation of the first church of Shwegyin seven weeks and a day after Mr. Harris's arrival at that station. But cloud and gloom soon came upon this little band, for, shortly after those converts had been baptized and the little company of disciples had observed the Lord's Supper together for the first time, the missionary's wife, who had contracted a disease common to the country, but had somewhat recovered, suffered a relapse. It soon became evident that she had not much longer to live. It is said that in her youth she was very much afraid of death, so much so that, when her own mother died in a farm house on the Berkshire hills of Massachusetts, she dared not go into the room where the body lay, but peered in through the window. But now, when the time of her own departure was at hand, knowing how hard it would be for her husband to perform the last sad rites—for there was no other white woman within hundreds of miles of

the place—she pointed out the dress she wished to wear, helped to put it on, saw to the combing of her hair, did all she could to prepare herself for burial, and when everything was complete so far as she could make it, she turned to her husband and said:

"It is not often that a mother has to array herself for her own funeral, but I have done it with as much composure as if I were going out to make a call." After preparing the crude coffin with his own hands, placing the body in it and burying it with the aid of the few disciples who were about, the sorrowing husband and father had to take the four little children to Moulmein and put them in the care of a missionary lady returning to America. As he stood on the deck and bade them good-bye, one little fellow put his arms around his father's neck, and said:

"I cannot let you go, papa. I cannot let you go." And the father put his head tenderly over the little one and said:

"Can't we do this for Jesus?"

Can it be doubted that when the missionary went back to his field the memory of the triumphant death of that saintly woman and the presence among them of one whom they greatly loved enduring, for their sakes, separation from all he held dear, and moving among them without complaint, with only kindly smiles and cheerful words for them and theirs—can it be doubted that it meant

much to the spiritual life of those new converts? To this day the Karen disciples of the Shwegyin mission, by the common consent of those who know them, shed forth a peculiar aroma of Christian resignation and submissive trust. In all probability this has been due in no small degree to the influence of their first missionary.

It may not be out of place to digress just here for the purpose of touching briefly on the subject of that supreme sacrifice of missionary life, the separation of families. Is it right? Even though the missionary himself may be willing to endure all the privations and hardships which may be involved in his work, is he justified in making his children suffer with him? Do not his obligations as a father require that he should give them the personal care and training which only a father can bestow? It is a difficult problem. No missionary ever undertakes to tell another what he should do. But it is evident that Jesus considered it quite within the range of possibility that his disciples would have to do that very thing, for he pronounces blessing upon those who leave father and mother and wife and children for his sake and the gospel's, and we may be sure he thought all around the subject. In other occupations men leave their children not only without incurring criticism, but even sometimes receiving high praise. If Lord Roberts was glad to give up his children and lay them away in foreign graves in order that he might

serve his queen, may not the missionary do much the same thing for the service of the Great King? There is this also to be said, that in not a few instances the children of missionaries have themselves caught the spirit of self-sacrifice from their parents and have been willing to take up and endure gladly the heart grief, not because they loved their parents less than other children love their parents—the ties are often more than usually close in the families of missionaries—but because they loved the great cause more than they loved their own comfort. "Then, who will tell those poor people about Jesus?" was the first question of one such missionary daughter when she was informed of the death of her father which had just taken place on his field of labor. No thought of her own great loss! When God in his mercy takes the children of missionaries in a special manner under his brooding care and instils in them such a spirit, may not that be compensation enough even to those children themselves for all that they have suffered? Is not the spirit of self-sacrifice itself a rich possession, and may it not even have a restraining, a directing, a purifying, an inspiring influence over the one who has it, though that person be but a little child, more than equaling all the oversight and care that father or mother can give?

Will, then, the people of God in America unite with the missionary, as never before, in that spirit of real self-sacrifice which is demanded not of the

missionary alone, but of every true follower of Christ? There is nothing which the servant of God more deeply craves. It is needful for the effective conduct of the work of world evangelization that the entire life and thought of Christ's people everywhere should be bound up in the mighty grip of one common devotion.

Finally, there is needed on the part of God's people in the home land a truer appreciation of the stupendousness and at the same time of the worthwhileness of the missionary enterprise. If the hosts of Satan from the West as well as from the East are to unite in this great conflict, if the brightest minds to be found anywhere are to be engaged in battle against the Lord and against his Anointed, then surely the very best possible equipment is needed for the carrying on of this warfare on the part of the people of Christ, the best training, the keenest intelligence, the completest endowment. "The best belongs to the worst," is an aphorism to which a noted divine gave expression, but he was content to remain in his aristocratic pulpit and minister to his people the sparkling scintillations of his brilliant mind. That which many admit as a theory must become an inner conviction on the part of God's people and a spring of effective action. "Why should you go to Asia to throw away your talents on the heathen? You are needed in this country," is a species of foolish flattery which might be passed

over in silence were it not too often the expression of sober opinion on the part of leading lights among the churches of America. Whatever advantages of education and culture the missionary may have had, and however assiduously he may have applied himself to getting to the full their benefits, he will feel that he needs the expenditure of every available power, latent or acquired, in the prosecution of his work.

Even from the point of view of him who thinks only in terms of weights and measures, and numbers and values, and muscle and brawn the missionary enterprise is worth while. Many people in western lands are engaged in works of mercy, in prison reform, in the suppression of child labor, in alleviating the condition of workers in sweat shops, in securing sanitary surroundings in the slums of cities. All honor to such, to every one who labors for the advancement of humanity in any direction. But where is there on the face of the earth an enterprise in which a handful of people have wrought, as among the Karens, the conservation of an entire race, and that, not as the main thing sought, but merely as a by-product? From any and every point of view the work of Christian missions may challenge comparison with any other work for the advancement of good among men.

Let Christian people everywhere, then, arise. As God has brought peace and prosperity to the Karens of Burma and outpoured his blessing upon

them as a race, even though some refused to accept his word, so will God yet outpour his grace and his blessing, his peace and his glory upon all the world, and every tongue shall confess and every knee shall bow. The missionary enterprise worth while? When the glint in the dewdrop turns black, when the sheen of the rainbow ceases, when the sun and the moon and the stars are darkened in the sky, when gloom is better than brightness, when death is preferable to life, when it is better to doubt and fear, cringe and shrink, whine and moan, weep and shudder, than to leap and shout and sing, when melancholy is to be preferred to gladness, when it is the height of wisdom to seek despair, then, the missionary enterprise may prove a failure!

Is the lesson of the book clear? Has the writer succeeded in bringing out forcibly his dominant thought? There shines a star in the East. It is a morning star. While still the other heavens are dark, with only a faint glimmer of light here and there, it gleams. Not that its luster is always clear and pure. Rather, like twinkling stars, it now flashes out, then darkens, now flashes out, then darkens. At first there was that wonderful light which shone out in the Karen tradition, that conception of God as holy, righteous, transcendent, infinite, eternal, ineffable. Then there was the dimming of that light by grosser thoughts, obscurer notions of the Infinite One, and the strange,

fearful delusion by Satan. But again there flashed forth the messages of the prophets, speaking of hope and cheer, of repentance and remission, of forgiveness and pardon, with the renewal of blessing and favor. Once more there came the darkening, the waning faith of hope long deferred, the doubts and fears of a race ground down under the heel of oppression. Later came the glad moment when hopes that had been dimmed suddenly gleamed forth again. The book, the book, the long lost book had come! It was here. The younger brother, with white skin and loving eyes, was here! He spoke of life and joy. He brought with him wonderful things. He was indeed the son to whom Father God had imparted all wisdom, his wisdom would soon be theirs; they would be a nation again, and place their feet upon the necks of their enemies. There were shouts of joy, heralds of gladness to bid welcome to the white brother and to summon all the people to the feast. Then there was disappointment. Not in physical luxury and temporal splendor was the new kingdom to arise; it was to be a spiritual empire, a reign of meekness, of sobriety, of truth. What! Had they not suffered enough? Had they not long enough occupied the seats of the humble? Was this to be all? Hark back then to the past. Serve Satan again. Cast off the new fetters and return to the old. And so again a period of gloom, a darkening of the shadows, the dimming of hope

and faith and enthusiasm and zeal. But gradually once more there has been the quiet, steady gleaming forth of a brighter, truer faith, a hope that shall never be dimmed, the deep, sweet consciousness of God, the submissive trust, the inner spiritual perception, the confidence of things unseen yet real. Not that even this faith is perfect, this light complete. Only this is to be said of it—it gleams on and on with increasing luster and beauty until perchance—who knows?—it may be a guiding star for many.

But this is not all. It cannot be. No, this star that shines so brightly ushers in the dawn that shall yet illumine the whole East. As this star is now gleaming, a single speck of light against a benighted sky, so soon, yes, very soon—sooner perhaps than even the most hopeful prophets of today dare think—not single stars here and there, but the whole sky will be lighted up, the entire East will glow with radiance and splendor. And then—and then—who knows?—that may be the appointed time when the Sun of Righteousness will arise and illumine the whole world with his radiance, when with a shout of victory, the Lord himself shall return, and the fulfilment of all things spoken at the mouth of the holy prophets may be accomplished. God speed the day!

This all too fragmentary account of Christian missions to the Karens of Burma has been given, not for its own sake alone, but in order that it

might cheer the people of God and spur them on in the confident expectation that, great as have been the achievements of God's grace among this people so great and even greater will doubtless be the triumphs of his power and love, over all the nations that are now shrouded in darkness, not only in Asia, but in Africa, in South America, in the isles of the sea, and wherever sin, pain, wretchedness and need are found. The Prince of Peace shall yet reign. What though the nations rage! There is a God who will surely make the wrath of man to praise him. And there will come a day when men shall beat their spears into pruning hooks, and wars shall cease and strifes will be o'er, and love will abound and righteousness will flourish, and Him whose right it is to reign shall all nations serve.

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